



EYEWITNESS TRAVEL

INDIA



FESTIVALS • MYTHOLOGY

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HOTELS • NATIONAL PARKS

TREKKING • BEACHES • MAPS



THE GUIDES THAT SHOW YOU WHAT
OTHERS ONLY TELL YOU

India Region by Region



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& KASHMIR**
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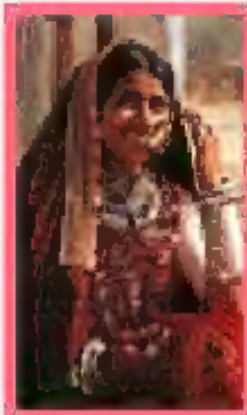
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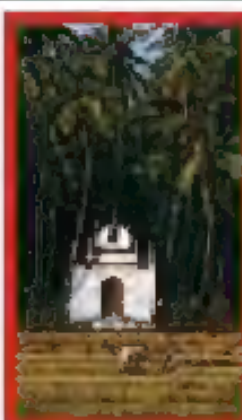
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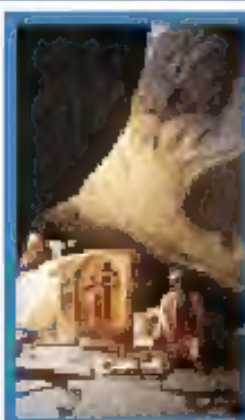
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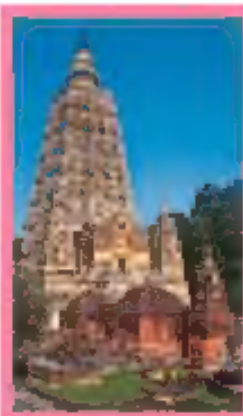




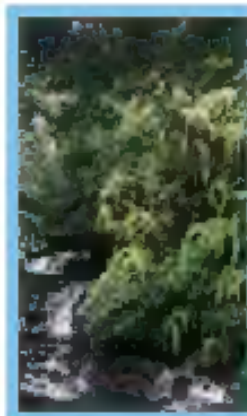
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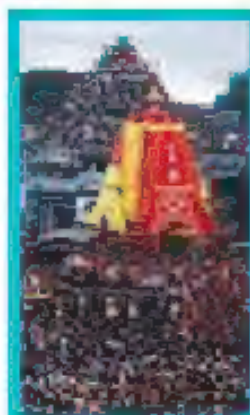
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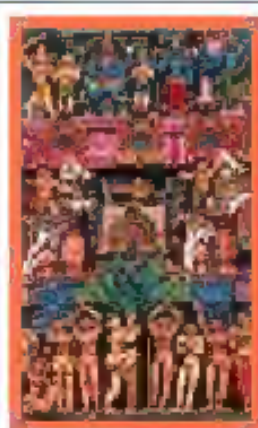
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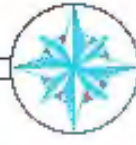
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EYEWITNESS TRAVEL

INDIA







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**The external boundaries of India as shown in this book are
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Ashokan Capital, Sarnath

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Fruit vendors on the pavements of
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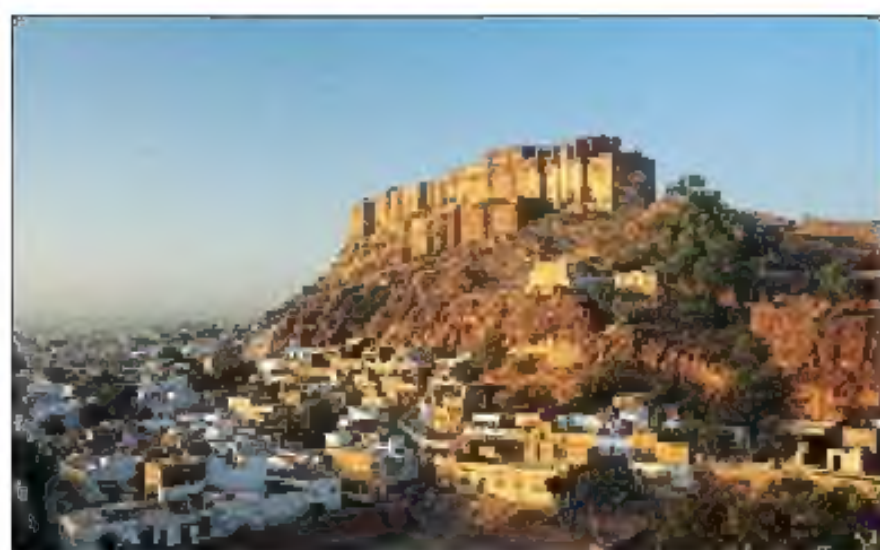
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Mehrangarh Fort, towering over the city of Jodhpur

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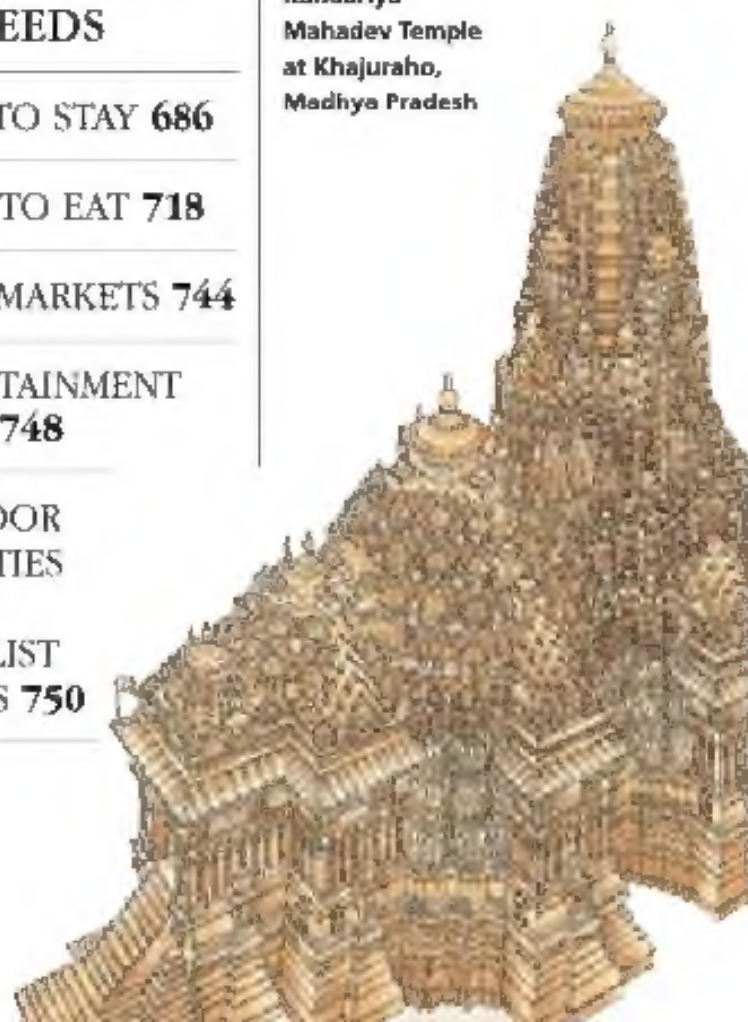
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INTRODUCING INDIA



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DISCOVERING INDIA

India is one of the most diverse nations in the world. In area, it is the seventh largest country and in population second only to China. Within its geographical confines, stretching from the Great Himalayas in the north to the tropical southern peninsula, there is a dizzying variety of cultures

languages, ethnic groups, beliefs and lifestyles that few countries or continents possess. The past is ever-present and centuries-old forts and temples happily coexist with the modern. The following six pages give highlights of each region to help visitors make the most of this incredible country



Intricately painted wall mural



The graceful Qutb Minar in Delhi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

DELHI

- Magnificent monuments
- Bustling Chandni Chowk
- Imperial grandeur of Lutyens's New Delhi

Delhi, India's capital, lies at the heart of northern India and has been an important site for about 1,000 years. Remains of its past lie scattered within both Old and New Delhi. Among its famous monuments are the **Qutb Minar** tower (see p94), **Humayun's Tomb** (see p83) – inspiration for the Taj Mahal – and the **Red Fort** (see pp86–7), all UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Chandni Chowk's lanes in Old Delhi (see pp84–5) are filled with shops and eating places. Stop by for some country-renowned Mughlai cuisine at **Karims's** (see p720) near **Jami Masjid** (see p86).

Imperial architect Lutyens designed much of New Delhi. Begin a tour at **Rashtrapati Bhavan** (see p74).

HARYANA & PUNJAB

- The glittering Golden Temple in Amritsar
- Patiala's palaces and forts
- Vibrant crafts bazaars

An area of flat plains and friendly towns, this region is also home to the glorious **Golden Temple**, the sacred shrine of the Sikhs (see pp106–7) and a must-see in the holy city of **Amritsar** (see pp104–5). Another splendid city is the former princely state of **Patiala** (see p102), with fine 18th- and 19th-century forts, palaces and gardens. The bazaars here offer a choice of the city's famed leather shoes (*putis*) and embroidery (*phulkari*). **Surajkund's** (see p100) famous crafts fair (*melas*) is held each February. Architecture fans should not miss the region's capital, **Chandigarh** (see p100), designed by Le Corbusier.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

- Shimla: summer capital of the British Raj
- Little Tibet
- Scenic treks

Shimla (see pp110–12) is now the state capital, and a walk through The Mall offers glimpses of charming 19th-century Colonial architecture. From the Ridge there are splendid views of the Himalayas.

In **Dharamsala** (see pp122–3) the seat of the Dalai Lama is the Tibetan

enclave of McLeodganj. Here, the Government-in-Exile maintains the monasteries, performing arts centre and archives to keep the spiritual culture of Tibet alive. The state also offers great trekking options around the beautiful region of the **Sangla Valley** (see pp118–19) and the hill station of **Manali** (see 128).

LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR

- Srinagar's houseboats
- Monasteries along the Indus
- Ancient caravan routes

This Himalayan state is home to Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. In the predominantly Muslim Valley of Kashmir, a paradise of rice fields and waterways is **Srinagar** (see pp154–5), where ornate houseboats can be seen moored on the lakes, and graceful



Buddhist monasteries against the dramatic landscapes of Ladakh



The Taj Mahal at sunrise, a sublime experience

stokaras sea flowers and vegetables on the backwaters. Ladakh, where the Indus flows, is a cold desert whose inhabitants practise Tibetan Buddhism.

This incredibly beautiful region is home to ancient monasteries such as **Alchi** (see pp144–6) and **Hemis** (see p140). Ladakh's ancient caravan routes that linked India to the Silk Route now function as popular **trekking trails** (see pp172–3) or as tour routes, such as the one passing through the remote and intriguing **Nubra Valley** (see p143).

UTTAR PRADESH & UTTARANCHAL

- The superlative Taj Mahal
- Nawabi Lucknow
- Varanasi: City of Light
- The Great Himalayas in the Garhwal region

Uttar Pradesh, one of India's largest and most populous states, is watered by the country's great rivers – the Yamuna and Ganges. Three great cities lie along these riverine paths. **Agra** (see pp168–77), the city of the **Taj Mahal** (see pp172–5) and other magnificent monuments built by the Mughals, **Lucknow** (see pp196–8), the city of the nawabs, is famous for its refinement, stately architecture and superb cuisine, and **Varanasi** (see pp202–8), the world's oldest city and Hinduism's holiest place of worship

The Great Himalayas in Kumaon and the **Garhwal** (see p187) are full of sacred peaks and provide excellent trekking terrain. Adventurers will love expeditions such as the **Gaumukh Trail** and the challenging **Curzon Trail** to the **Nanda Devi Sanctuary** (see pp188–9).

BIHAR & JHARKHAND

- The Buddhist Route
- Forests of Jharkhand
- Sonapur's elephant fair

It was in Bihar that the earliest empires emerged and this antique land derives its name from *vihara* or monastery. The Buddhist Route includes **Bodhi Gaya** (see pp222–3) where the Buddha attained enlightenment, **Rajgir** (see p220), where the Buddha lived and taught and the earliest imperial capital, and the great university of **Nalanda** (see pp218–19). Jharkhand is made up largely by the Chhota Nagpur Plateau, a

thickly forested area home to the Munda and Oraon tribes. **Palamau National Park** (see p224) offers glimpses of wildlife and some tribal villages. More local colour can be had at **Sonepur** (see p216), where Asia's largest live-stock fair is held.

MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH

- The Great Stupa at Sanchi
- Khajuraho's temples
- Wildlife sanctuaries

The hill of **Sanchi** (see pp242–3) is one of the best preserved sites of Buddhist India. Its crowning glory is the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the **Great Stupa** (see pp244–5) with its four impressive gateways and intricate carvings. The town's environs are also rich in ancient ruins.

Khajuraho's group of temples (see pp236–8), also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, boasts not only splendid architecture, but a marvelous wealth of sculpture, including the much-talked-of erotic friezes. Its greatest temple is **Kandariya Mahadev**, dedicated to Shiva.

It is said that Rudyard Kipling set his classic, *The Jungle Book*, in the deciduous forests of **Kanha National Park** (see pp254–5), still considered one of the best places to see the elusive tiger. The state's other important national park is **Bandhavgarh** (see p235).



Tiger resting at the Bandhavgarh Park, Madhya Pradesh



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata's most celebrated landmark

KOLKATA

- The Raj revisited
- Victoria Memorial
- India's oldest museum

Kolkata, capital of the British Empire until 1911, saw a brilliant cultural and intellectual renaissance in the 19th century. At the heart of this fascinating city is **BBD Bagh** (see pp270–71), which contains some of the finest buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries.

To its south is the **Maidan** park (see p273) and **Victoria Memorial** (see pp274–5), the Raj's finest architectural legacy, named after Queen Victoria. On view here is an excellent selection of Raj memorabilia. India's oldest museum, the 19th-century **Indian Museum** (see pp276–7), has a superb collection of miniatures and stone and bronze sculptures.

WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM

- The Ganges delta
- Terracotta temples
- The eastern Himalayas

West Bengal and Sikkim's varied landscape ranges from the steamy delta area to the icy Himalayas bordering Tibet. In the vast Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta is the **Sunderbans** (see pp288–9), the world's largest mangrove swamp and habitat of the Bengal tiger.

The terracotta temples of **Bishnupur** (see pp290–91), built in the 17th century, are unique and have no equal in India. The most famous is the richly decorated **Shyama Raya Temple**.

Traversing the Teesta River, the **North Sikkim Tour** (see p300), which begins at **Gangtok** (see p298), the capital of Sikkim, provides breathtaking views of the eastern Himalayas, including **Kanchendzonga** (see p302), the world's third highest peak.



Orchid from Sikkim

ORISSA

- Konark's Sun God temple
- Great bird-watching
- Temples of Bhubaneswar

This beautiful state of forests and coastline boasts an incredible artistic and cultural heritage and is the birthplace of one of India's most exquisite classical dances, Odissi.

Konark (see pp310–12) has the temple to the Sun God, which stands on the coast and is a marvel in stone. Built in the 13th century, it was conceived as a gigantic chariot. Further down the coast is the great lagoon, **Chilika Lake** (see p316), a paradise for birds and aquatic life, especially dolphins. It is also noted for its seafood.

Bhubaneswar (see pp306–9), the state capital,

is a city full of temples, including the impressive **Lingaraj** and the lyrical **Rajarani** temples. The city's environs are well known for their archaeological sites and craft villages.

ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST

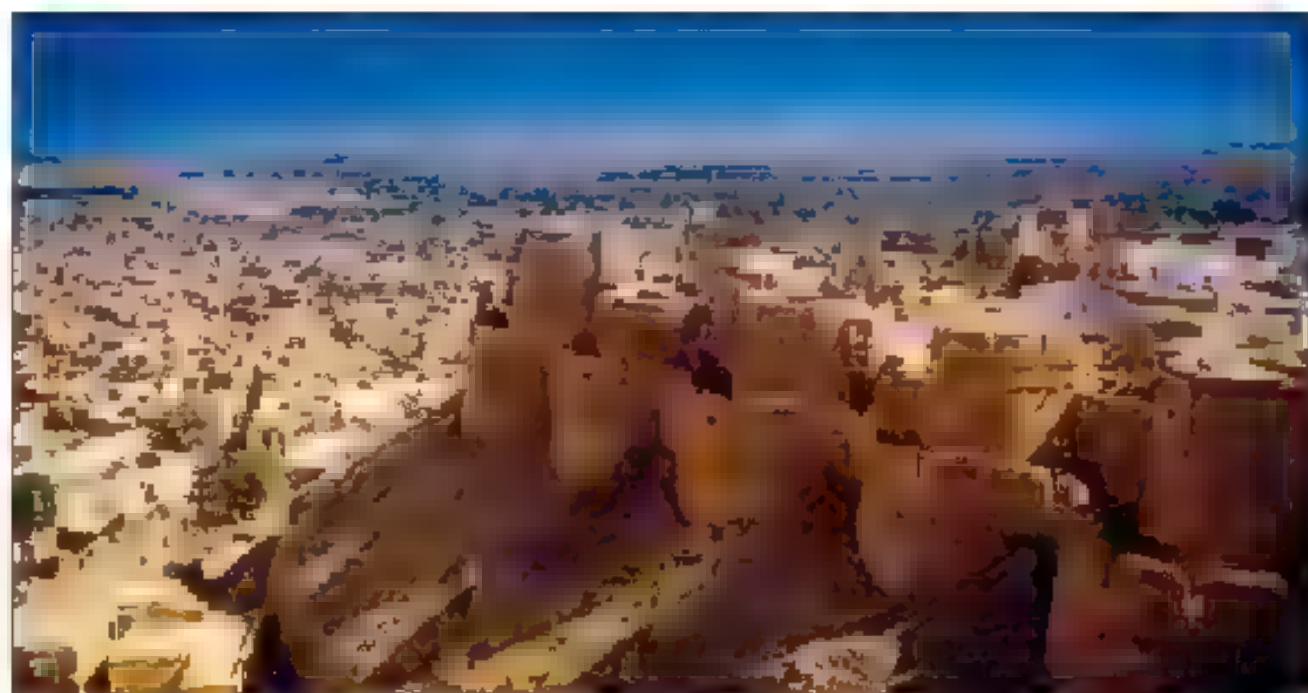
- Rhino-watching
- Tawang Monastery
- Colourful Kohima

Seven states form this large and diverse part of India. The mighty **Brahmaputra** river flows through this area, dominating life in Assam. **Kaziranga National Park** (see pp330–31) lies on its banks and is home to the one-horned rhinoceros. **Tawang Monastery** (see p327) in Arunachal Pradesh is the largest Buddhist monastery in India and belongs to the Yellow Hat sect. Nearby is the **Brumdingchung Nunnery**, set in a landscape of snowy peaks and Monpa villages. **Kohima** (see p339), the capital of Nagaland, is an introduction to tribal

India, as is evident in the boldly patterned textiles, dramatic woodcarvings and spirited dances. The **War Cemetery** here commemorates one of the most decisive battles of World War II.



Rhino-watching at Assam's Kaziranga National Park



Jaisalmer, one of the world's largest and most dramatic forts

RAJASTHAN

- Jaipur & Amber
- Desert fortresses
- The Lake City of Udaipur

India's most popular region for tourism, Rajasthan continues to haunt the imagination with its stark landscapes, fortresses and the colour and drama of its people. The 17th-century city of **Jaipur** (see pp352-63) is both picturesque and a shopper's paradise. **Art and Badi Chaupar** (see pp354-5) are colourful bazaars, the **City Palace** (see pp356-7) still the residence of the Jaipur kings, and **Hawa Mahal** (see pp352-3) the fanciful Palace of Winds. Crowning the crest of a hill just outside Jaipur is the magnificent old fort palace of **Amber** (see pp364-6). Dating from the late 16th century, this was the capital of the Jaipur rulers for almost 200 years.

In the arid Thar Desert is **Jaisalmer** (see pp380-91), a town and fort built of gold sandstone. Among its many attractions are palaces and houses (*havelis*) that have been intricately carved like jewels. Jaisalmer also has a vibrant folk music tradition.

Around the shores of Lake Pichola is the fairytale city of **Udaipur** (see pp398-401). Traditional

havelis, palaces, *ghats*, temples and bazaars make this city and its equally interesting environs a rare experience. One of the world's great hotels, the **Lake Palace** (see p705) is located on an island on the lake. Nearby is another small palace, **Jag Mandir**.

GUJARAT

- Bustling Ahmedabad
- The stepwells of Gujarat
- Modhera's Sun Temple

Gujarat's leading city and commercial and industrial centre, **Ahmedabad** (see pp410-13), has a rich heritage. The Old City, a maze of towering gateways

bazaars, mosques and temples can be seen on a walking tour organized by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. The city's unique **Calico Museum** (see pp412-13) is also worth a visit for an overview of India's rich textile traditions. Beyond the city centre is **Sabarmati Ashram** where Mahatma Gandhi lived during the days of India's Freedom Movement.

Water scarcities have plagued Gujarat for centuries. An ingenious answer to this perennial problem were stepwells. These elaborately decorated underground wells conserved water as well as provided a cool place for social interaction. The finest, **Adalaj Vav** (see pp414-15) was

built in 1499 by Queen Rudabai and houses 800 individual sculptures. Others are **Dada Harir Vav** in Ahmedabad and **Rani ni Vav** in Patan (see p417). The **Sun Temple at Modhera** (see pp418-19), built in 1026, is laid out with astronomical precision. The temple's richly carved exterior and interior depict Hindu deities in great detail and are fine examples of medieval sculpture. Some of the most outstanding carvings can be seen on the walls and pillars of the inner sanctum.



Sculptures at the Rani ni Vav stepwell



The ancient rock-cut caves of Ajanta, near Aurangabad

MUMBAI

- Magnificent Victoria Terminus
- Elephanta Island
- Bollywood magic

Cosmopolitan Mumbai is a city of contrasts, where skyscrapers stand next to stately Victorian edifices. A walk through the eclectic **Kala Ghoda** district (see pp448–9), emphasizes this fact. Further north, **Victoria Terminus** (see pp454–5) is a riot of domes, spires and arches, and a star of Victorian Gothic architecture.

Off the coast is **Elephanta Island** (see p461), with its 6th-century AD rock-cut temples dedicated to Shiva. Mumbai is also the home of India's vibrant film industry **Bollywood** (see pp32–3), and in sprawling **Film City** (see p460) extravagant, big-budget films are made.

MAHARASHTRA

- Ancient frescoes at Ajanta
- Island-forts of the sparkling Malvan Coast

The Western Ghats separate the slim **Konkan Coast** (see pp438–9) from the volcanic lava of the cotton-growing Deccan Plateau. The tradition of rock-cut caves was widespread in this region and at **Ajanta** (see pp479–81) visitors can see the world-famous 5th-century frescoes on Buddhist themes. **Ellora**

(see pp476–8) has Jain, Buddhist and Hindu caves, the highlight of which is the **Kailasanatha Temple**. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is intricately carved out of a massive cliff. The picturesque **Malvan Coast** in South Konkan is dotted with sandy beaches, fishing villages and island forts, such as **Murud-Janjira** and **Kolaba** near **Alibag** (see p466).

GOA

- Portuguese flavour in Old Goa
- Panaji Old Town
- Idyllic beaches

Goa is a tourist haven with stunning beaches, grand mansions, such as **Braganza House** (see pp508–9), Indo-Portuguese culture and delicious cuisine. **Old Goa** (see pp496–501), the first capital of the Portuguese, is

a showcase of imperial Portuguese architecture clearly visible in the state's cathedrals, churches and monasteries.

Panaji Old Town (see pp488–9), especially **São Tomé** and **Fontainhas**, is typically Latin, with tile-roofed houses, gardens and restaurants. **Goa's beaches** (see p491) are splendid and stretch over 106 km (66 miles) from north to south.

KARNATAKA

- Palaces of Mysore
- Hampi: a heritage site
- Bijapur's Gol Gumbad



Narasimha sculpture at Hampi

Strikingly varied in landscape, Karnataka is rich in history and the arts. The former princely state was ruled from

Mysore, a city which has lovely palaces such as the 19th-century **Amba Vilas** (see pp518–519).

Nearby is **Srirangapattana** (see p516), once the headquarters of Tipu Sultan.

Amid huge boulders near the **Tungabhadra** river are the evocative ruins of **Hampi** (see pp330–33), once the capital of the richest kingdom in South India, the Vijayanagara Empire. To the north is **Bijapur** (see pp542–3), where the Deccan sultans' superb artistic legacy can be seen in the monumental tomb, the **Gol Gumbad**.



One of Goa's many idyllic beaches

CHENNAI

- Fort St George
- The Pantheon Complex
- Traditional Mylapore

Chennai entered history as Madras, India's first British settlement, centred around **Fort St George** (see pp560–61) and nearby **George Town** (see p561). Both contain fine examples of British Colonial architecture. The **Pantheon Complex** (see pp563–5) includes the Indo-Saracenic Government Museum, which has a rare collection of Buddhist sculptures from Amaravati, the Bronze Gallery and the Contemporary Art Gallery.

St Thomas, the apostle of Christ who came to India in AD 52, lived in Chennai. The **Little Mount** (see p573), where the saint was mortally wounded, has an imprint of his hand near the entrance. He is buried at the 16th-century **Basilica of San Thomé at Mylapore** (see p570), a busy traditional quarter.

TAMIL NADU

- The great Chola temples
- Spectacular Mamallapuram
- Charming Pondicherry

In this state of great stone temples and lush rice fields in the Kaveri Delta, is the city of **Thanjavur** (see pp596–9), where the Chola kings built the magnificent **Brihadishvara Temple** (see pp598–9). In the same district are the temples at **Chidambaram** (see p590) and **Darasuram** (see p593).

Along the Bay of Bengal, **Mamallapuram** (see pp578–9) was once a major port of the 7th-century Pallava kings. The dramatic Shore Temple sits precariously on the coast, while inland are the rock-cut **Panch Rathas** (see pp580–81). **Pondicherry** (see pp586–9), a former French colony, is also home to the Aurobindo Ashram.



Snorkelling in the waters off the Andaman Islands

ANDAMAN ISLANDS

- Coral reefs and crystal clear water
- Sinister history of Port Blair

An idyllic archipelago, the Andamans encompass several ecosystems including mangrove swamps, tropical forest and coral reefs. Glimpses of a paradisaic life can be had while snorkelling or scuba diving, especially around Jolly Buoy Island in the **Wandoor Marine National Park** (see pp620–21).

In the 19th century the islands served as a penal colony; the Cellular Jail in **Port Blair** (see p618) is a dark symbol of those times.

KERALA

- Sparkling coastline and picturesque backwaters
- Virgin rainforests
- Wooden architecture

Kerala offers an appealing mosaic of landscapes and cultures, as well as some fantastic coastline. No visit here is complete without a **Backwaters Tour** (see pp634–5) through the labyrinthine network of lush waterways. In the virgin rainforests of the **Wynad District** (see p654), glimpses of wild elephants and giant Malabar squirrels can be seen.

For an insight into the area's tumultuous past visit **Fort Kochi** (see pp644–5) in this bustling port-city. Also don't miss the **Padmana-**

bhapuram Palace (see pp636–37), one of the finest examples of Kerala's unique wooden architecture.

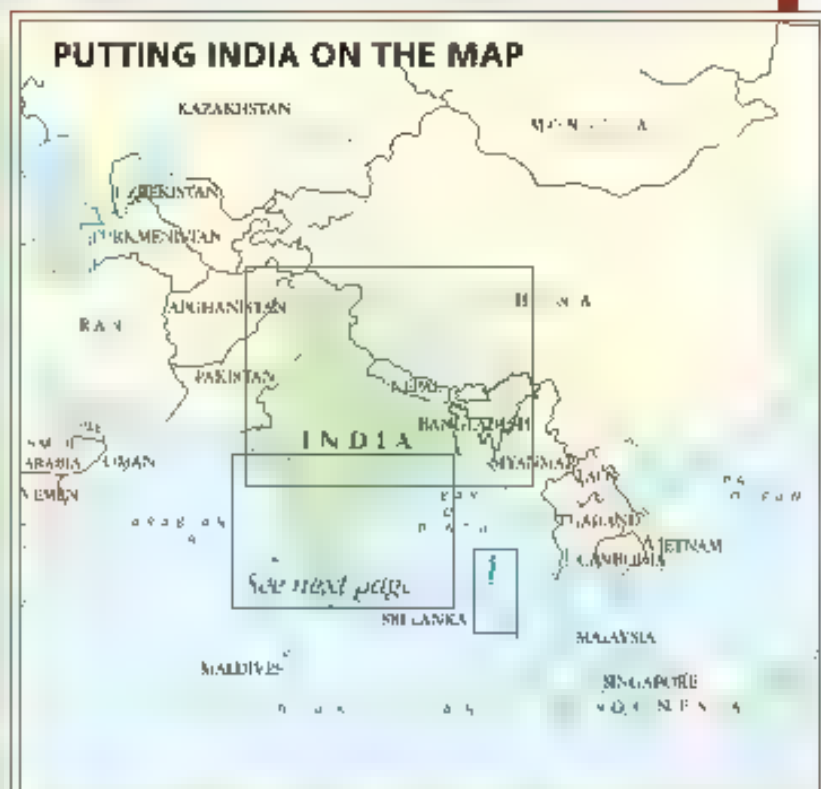
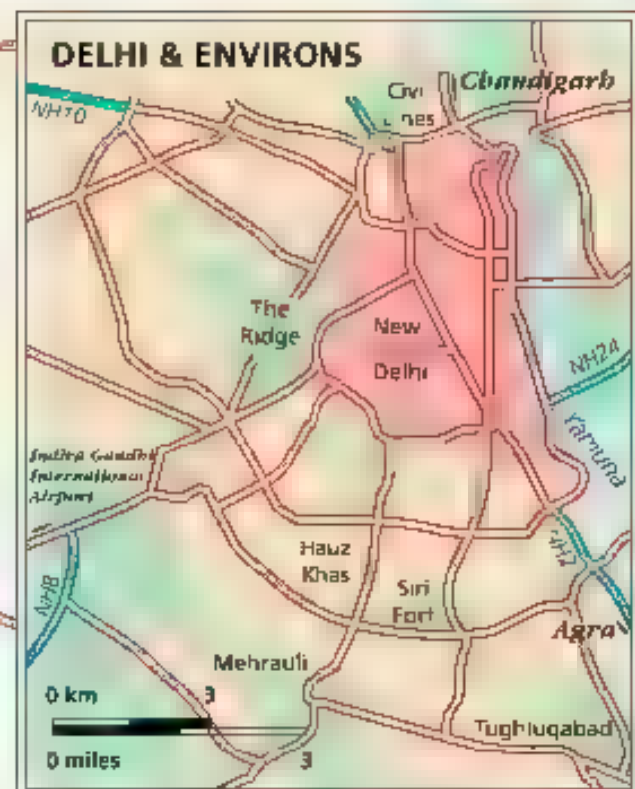
ANDHRA PRADESH

- Hyderabad's Old City
- The ruins of Golconda
- Buddhist sites

Hyderabad (see pp660–65) is a city of grand palaces, mosques and bazaars. The **Charminar** area (see pp662–3) is the best place to view the legacy of the city's incredibly rich Nizams. Outside the city are the vast ruins of **Golconda** (see pp666–7), a legendary 16th-century citadel. Along the Krishna river are the remains of the state's Buddhist settlements at **Amravati** (see p675) and **Nagarjunakonda** (see p676), named after a 2nd-century Buddhist philosopher.



The sprawling ramparts of Golconda Fort outside Hyderabad











The external boundaries of India as shown on this map are neither correct nor authentic.

Putting Southern India on the Map

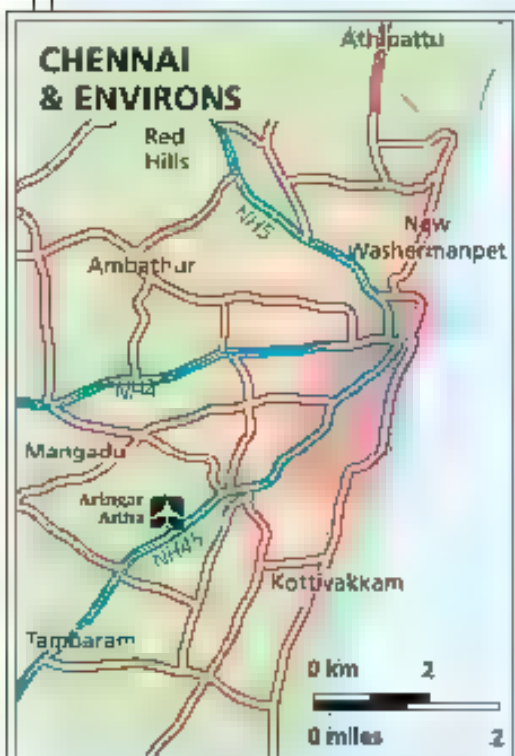
The six states of Southern India lie within the triangular peninsula that forms the lower part of the Indian subcontinent. With a population of 322 million, speaking six major languages, they cover an area of 955 945 sq km (369 092 sq miles) – larger than France and Germany combined. The western coast is flanked by the Arabian Sea, and the eastern coast by the Bay of Bengal, while the southern tip juts into the Indian Ocean. The rocky Deccan Plateau forms southern India's heartland, bordered on either side by the wooded hills of the Western and Eastern Ghats. The two largest cities are Mumbai (formerly Bombay) and Chennai (formerly Madras).

KEY

-  Central city area
-  International airport
-  Domestic airport
-  Ferry port
-  Ferry route
-  National highway
-  Major road
-  State border



CHENNAI & ENVIRONS





Landscape and Wildlife



Plum-headed parakeet

India has an extraordinary diversity of landscapes and vegetation, supporting a rich variety of wildlife. The country is bounded on the north by the majestic Himalayas. Along their foothills, sweeping the breadth of Central India, are the fertile, densely populated Indo-Gangetic Plains, while the arid Thar Desert covers much of Western India. South of the Gangetic Plains is the Deccan Plateau, flanked by the hills of the Eastern and Western Ghats. India's 7,516 km (4,670 mile) long coastline borders on the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal.



The Himalayan landscape features snowcapped peaks, glacial streams and pine-covered slopes (see pp64-5)



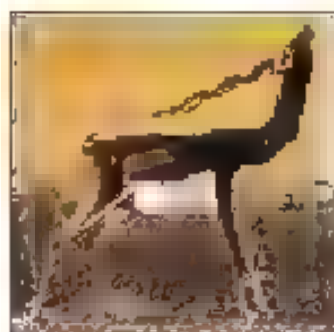
THE ARID WEST

The Thar Desert and the semi-arid scrublands adjoining it support a surprising variety of flora and fauna. The sand dunes of Rajasthan give way further west to the barren salt-flats and marshes of the Rann of Kutch.



THE GANGETIC PLAINS

The rich alluvial soil of these vast plains which stretch across India from the northwest to the east has been cultivated for thousands of years. Today rice, as well as wheat, sugarcane and pulses are grown here.

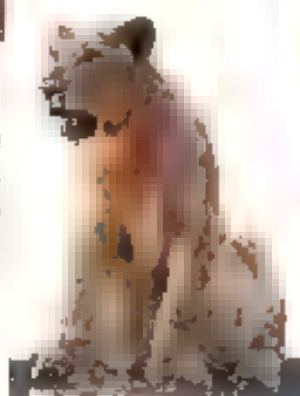


Blackbucks are among the swiftest animals, covering up to 80 km (50 miles) per hour.



Asian elephants number only 45,000 in comparison to a quarter of a million African elephants, making this smaller species the more endangered one.

Asiatic lions once found all over northern India are now seen only in the Gir Sanctuary in Gujarat (see p423).



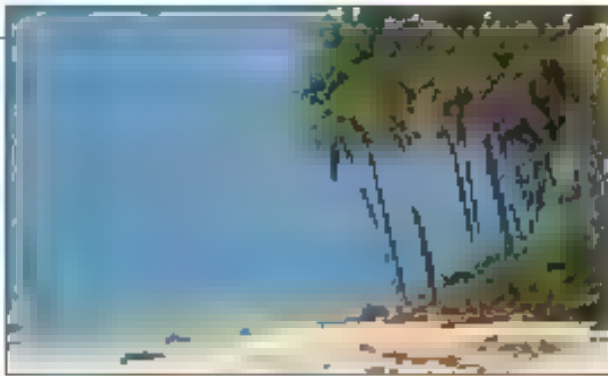
Painted storks migrate to lakes and swamps during their breeding season between July and October.



Crested serpent eagles are large raptors with a distinctive pattern of black and white bands on their underwings.



Wild boars are common in most deciduous forests in India. The males have tusks and can be very aggressive.

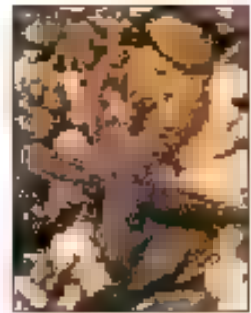


THE COASTS

The diverse landscapes of the coasts include sandy beaches in Goa and Kerala, fringed by coconut palms, coral reefs in the Andamans and mangrove forests in West Bengal and Orissa. The east coast is often hit by cyclones.



Avocets migrate to the coasts and marshes of Gujarat and Maharashtra in November.



Starfish, which cling tenaciously to rocks, can be seen in tidal pools all along the Indian coastline.



THE DECCAN PLATEAU

Separated from the Gangetic Plains by the scattered ranges of the Vindhyas, the Deccan Plateau is covered with black volcanic soil and ancient crystalline rocks. The plateau's mineral wealth includes gold and diamonds.



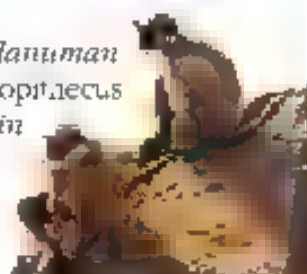
Tigers, an endangered species and numbering only 3,500 in the country, are found across peninsular India.



Daniel butterflies are common in the region.



Langurs or **Hanuman monkeys** (*Semnopithecus entellus*), live in large groups led by an adult male.



Peacocks, India's national bird, perform a spectacular dance when rain clouds appear.



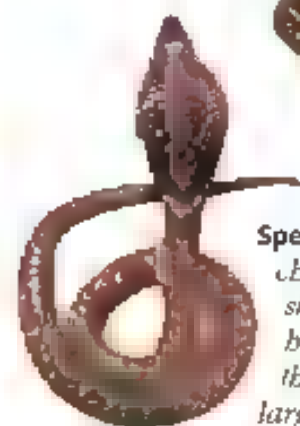
THE GHATS

The hills of the Western and Eastern Ghats are covered with forests of teak, rosewood, sal (*Shorea robusta*), and sandalwood (*Santalum album*), prized for its fragrant wood. Many orchid species also grow here.



Nilgiri tahrs live in the higher elevations of the Western Ghats (see p649).

Bullfrogs display their large vocal sacs during their mating season in the monsoon.



Spectacled cobras have characteristic spectacle-shaped markings on their hoods. Another reptile is the king cobra, the world's largest venomous snake.

Sacred Architecture



Ceiling panel from a Jain temple

India's 2,000-year-old architectural heritage is intrinsically linked to the country's major religions. Indigenous forms include Buddhist stupas and monasteries and Hindu and Jain temples (see pp396–7) in diverse styles. Many Indian temples, however, share common structural characteristics, being mostly built of stone columns and horizontal blocks, often richly carved with sacred

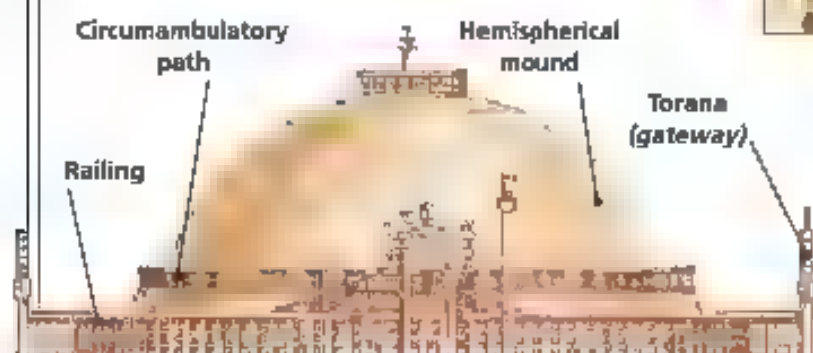
imagery and decorative motifs. The true arch and the dome—as well as the use of mortar, were introduced in the 12th century by the Muslim conquerors.



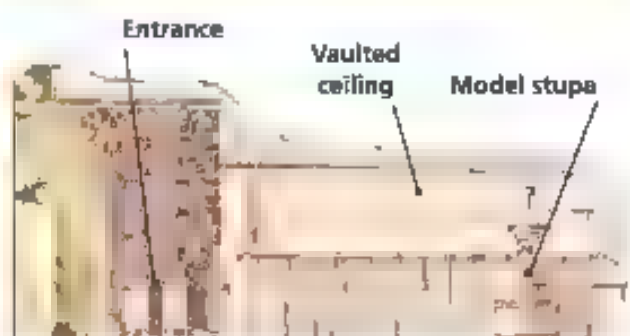
Sculpted column, Narayana Temple, Melkote

BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE

India's earliest religious monuments are stupas, hemispherical funerary mounds, and rock-cut shrines (*chaityas*) and monasteries (*viharas*). While *chaityas* were places of worship, *viharas* were dwelling places for Buddhist monks and consisted of small residential cells arranged around four sides of an open court.



Stupas were monumental reliquaries in which the ashes of Buddhist teachers, including the Buddha, were interred. The Sanchi Stupa (see pp244–5) is faced in stone, and surrounded by a high railing with gateways (*toranas*).



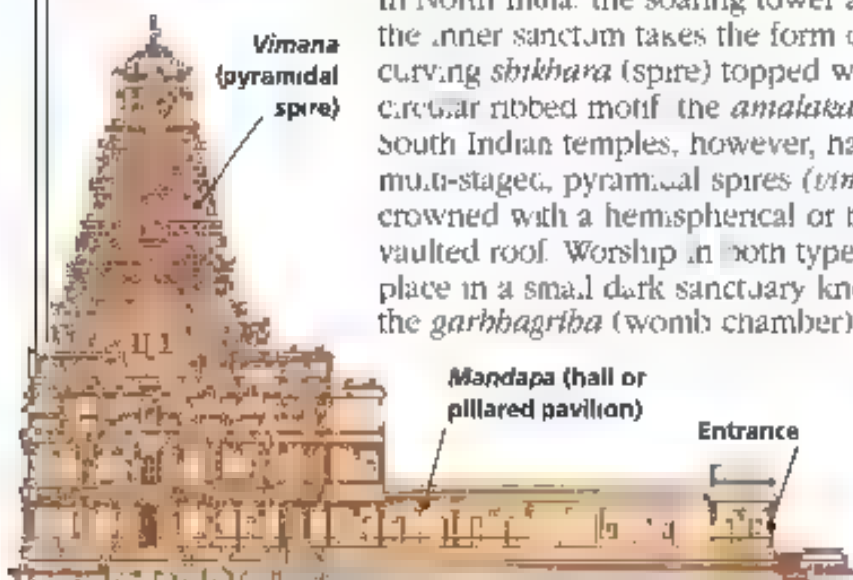
Chaityas served as halls (grottoes) for congregational worship and enshrined a model stupa at one end.

Rock-cut chaityas have distinctive barrel-vaulted ceilings expressed on the exterior as a horseshoe-shaped arch.

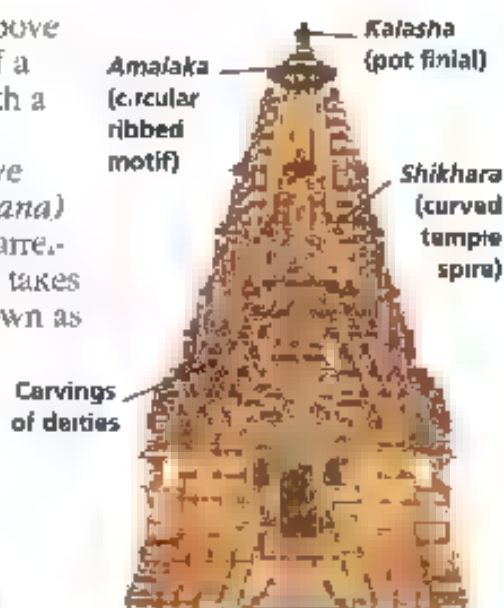


HINDU TEMPLES

In North India, the soaring tower above the inner sanctum takes the form of a curving *shikhara* (spire) topped with a circular ribbed motif, the *amalaka*. South Indian temples, however, have multi-staged, pyramidal spires (*vimana*) crowned with a hemispherical or barrel-vaulted roof. Worship in both types takes place in a small dark sanctuary known as the *garbhagriha* (womb chamber).

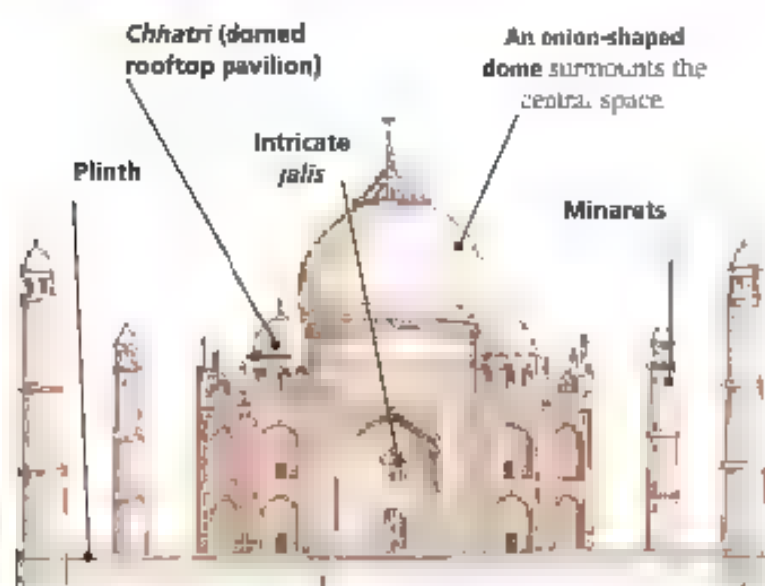


South Indian temples, such as Thanjavur's Brihadisvara Temple (see pp598–9), have corridors and spacious halls (*mandapas*) with a profusion of decorated columns. These lead to the *garbhagriha* above which rises the multi-staged spire.



Khajuraho's Kandariya Mahadev Temple's *shikhara* (see pp436–7) is considered the finest in North India.

ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE



Taj Mahal (see pp172-3), the zenith of Islamic architecture

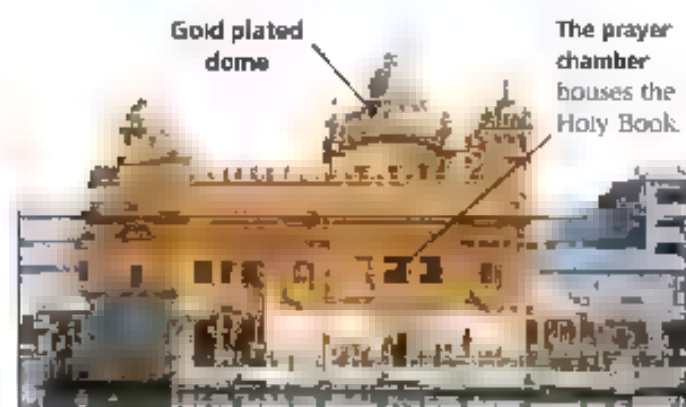
Mosques and tombs represent an imported tradition that was absorbed into Indian architecture. Mosques have domed prayer halls at one end of an open courtyard. The *mihrab* (arched niche) faces west, towards Mecca. The Mughals introduced the garden tomb, raised on a high plinth in the centre of a *charbagh*, an enclosed garden divided into four quarters. Decorative elements include Persian and Arabic calligraphy, geometric patterns and floral motifs, typical of Islamic art.



Mihrab, Bidar mosque (see p545)

GURDWARAS

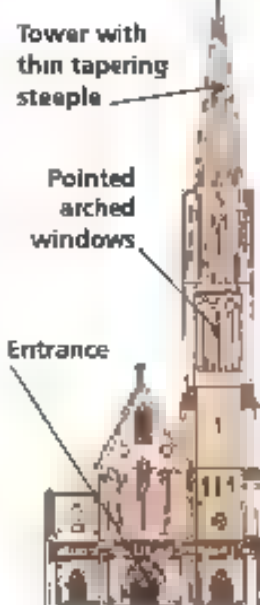
The Sikh gurdwara, a prayer chamber where the *Granth Sahib*, or Holy Book, is housed, is often roofed with a dome flanked by arcades. Based on the late-Mughal style prevailing in North India in the 18th century, gurdwaras blend Islamic and Hindu architectural styles.



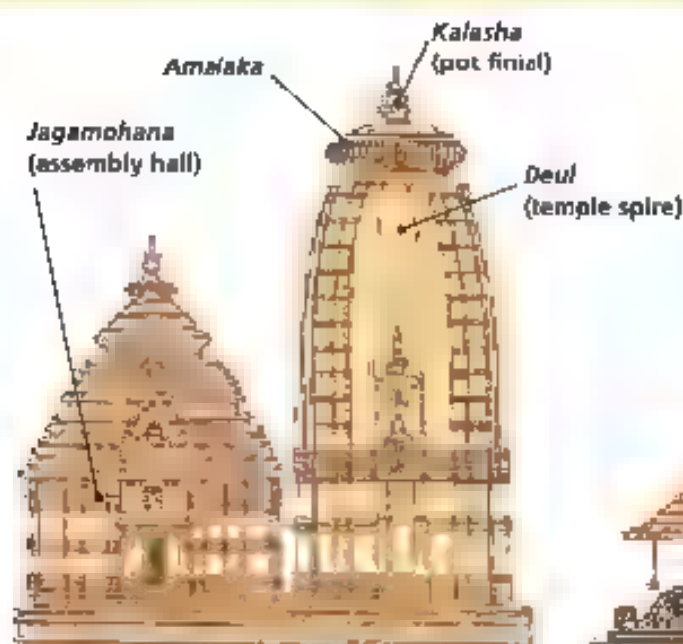
The Golden Temple in Amritsar (see pp106-107)

CHURCHES

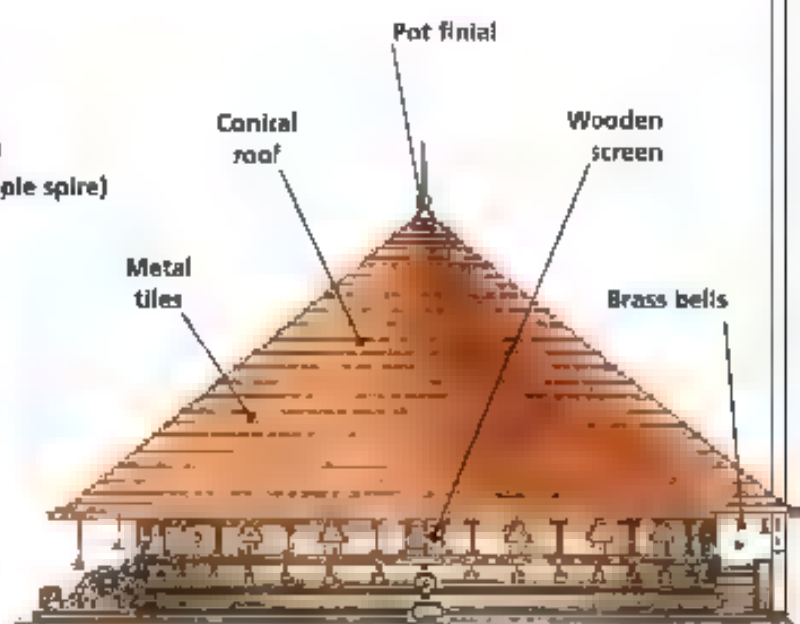
Though church architecture in Kerala predates the arrival of Europeans, most Christian places of worship, such as those in Goa (see pp496-7), are built in European styles. A common design has a Neo-Classical portico topped with a tapering steeple. Many Indian churches are also built in a Neo-Gothic style, such as the Afghan Memorial Church of St John the Evangelist (see p447).



Afghan Memorial Church, Mumbai



The Mukteshwar Temple (see p307) typifies Orissa's temple architecture. The sanctum has a conical spire (deul), and an adjoining assembly hall (jagamohana).



Kerala's temples, such as the one at Ettumonur (see p638), have a distinctive form. The sanctums are often circular with roofs of slanting tiers of metal sheets or terracotta tiles. Carved woodwork and animals embellish the structure.

Secular Architecture



Detail from a mirrored room

Magnificent secular buildings, such as forts, palaces and mansions (*havelis*) were built by powerful ruling and aristocratic families. Many of these, especially in Rajasthan and Gujarat (see pp 346–7), harmoniously combine monumental scale with superb decorative elements. The British imposed their own architectural stamp, a fusion of East and West. A variety of indigenous domestic forms that have remained unchanged through the ages can be seen throughout rural India.

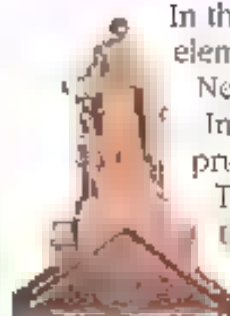
Windows are inspired by Rajput palaces.

Mughal dome



Laxmi Vilas in Vadodra (see p 419), built in the late 19th century

CIVIC ARCHITECTURE

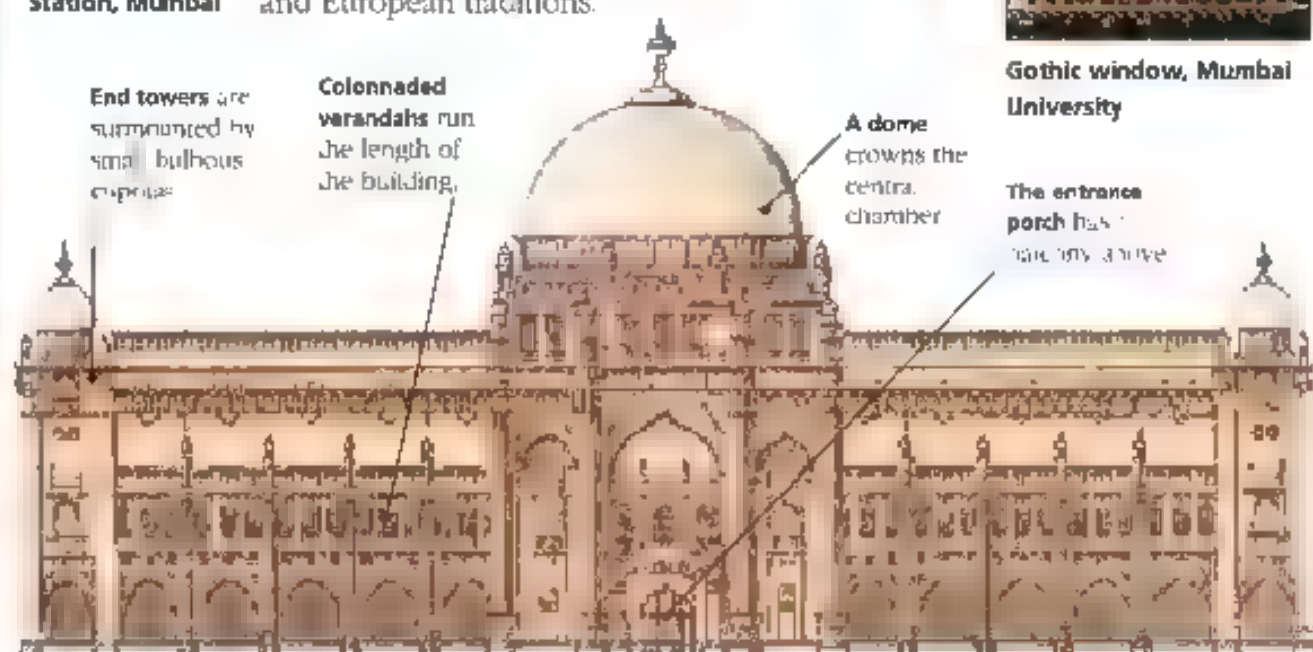


Sculpture, Churchgate Station, Mumbai

In the mid-19th century, the British began to incorporate elements from Indian Islamic architecture into European Neo-Classical or Gothic Revivalist styles. Known as Indo-Saracenic, this style reflected imperial and civic pride. Indo-Saracenic public buildings include Victoria Terminus (see pp 454–5) and Mumbai University and the High Court and Fgmore station in Chennai. This culminated in the building of the new capital at New Delhi (see pp 4–5), where Sir Edwin Lutyens and his associates evolved a grand architectural style which was a more elegant synthesis of Indian and European traditions.



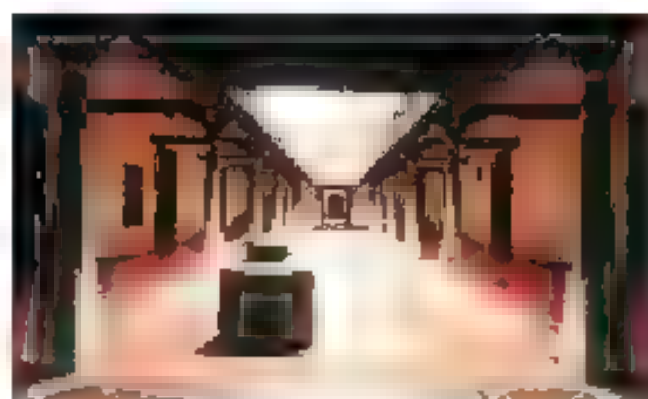
Gothic window, Mumbai University



Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai (see pp 450–51), inspired by Bijapur's Gol Gumbad (see p 543)

THE COURTYARD

Domestic architecture in India is governed by public and private spaces. The front portion of the house was open to visitors and guests but just beyond that was the courtyard, the heart of the house, restricted to the family. Larger mansions, such as those at Shekhawati (see p 372), Jaisalmer (see p 387) and Chettinad (see p 612), had several courtyards surrounded by elaborate colonnades. The separation of private and public spaces within the home grew out of social conventions that secluded women from the public gaze.



Courtyard with wooden pillars and carved doors

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE



A painted niche

Rural houses in India reflect the country's varied climate and the range of available materials. In spite of the diversity, certain overall principles prevail. A typical dwelling is approached from the street through a formal doorway, often sheltered by a verandah flanked by raised seating. The first room is usually used for both living and sleeping and is thus larger. Cooking and eating take place to the rear, on the other side of an inner courtyard, near the well or water supply. Hindu homes have a small masonry stand (*vrindavan*) in the courtyard, where the sacred *tulsi* (basil) plant is grown for daily worship.



Central Indian villages are tightly packed with houses that are either one-roomed mud structures or larger ones. Some have flat roofs where the family sleep at night in summer.

Mud walls are reinforced with straw and cowdung.

Thatch roofs, made of local elephant grass, are replaced every year.



Walls are made with strips of bamboo.

Extended timber acts as supports.



Tribal houses in the forested northeast are quickly constructed from wood and bamboo. Rooms are added on as the family grows.

Slate slabs are used to build strong, protective roofs.

Wooden pillars on the upper verandah.



Mountain homes are built on high ground and are double-storeyed, with the ground floor serving as a stable for livestock in winter.



Coastal houses have sloping tiled roofs as protection from sun and rain. The *tulsi* (basil) plant indicates that this is a Hindu home.

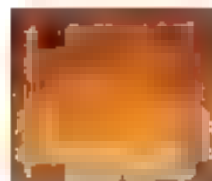
Desert dwellings are built with mud and consist of a single thatched room, enclosed by a wall. The circular kothi is used to store grain. Designs in white lime embellish the outer walls.

MATERIALS FOR CONSTRUCTION



Circular thatch ceiling

Traditionally, most houses were built of locally available material. Bamboo and thatch were employed in house construction in Bengal, Orissa and the northeast, while stone and terracotta tiles were preferred in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and South India. Sadly, such materials are now rapidly being replaced by steel and concrete. However, mud is still the most common material and is either applied directly or mixed with cowdung and straw.



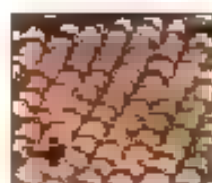
Woven bamboo panel for walls



Coconut palm leaf roof



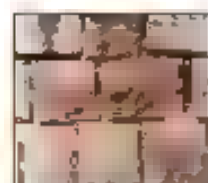
Thatched roof made of grass



Half-cylinder tiles



Terracotta sun-dried bricks



Stone slabs, ideal for walls

Hindu Mythology



Garuda, the great sun-eagle

The vast pantheon of Hindu gods, goddesses and their divine exploits is best explored through sculpture. The principles of temple architecture were defined and established under the imperial Guptas (4th–6th centuries AD). Indian temples are adorned by a profusion of sculptures that are not merely decorative but also provide a visual interpretation of Hindu mythology. The numerous manifestations of deities, such as Shiva, Vishnu and Devi (the goddess also known as Parvati, Durga, Kali) are depicted in great detail. Semi-divine beings, such as devotees, nymphs and musicians complete the picture.

Vedic gods such as Surya the Sun God were manifestations of nature and the elements. They were absorbed into the Hindu pantheon of deities almost 2,000 years ago.



Karttikeya is mounted on his peacock vehicle (*vahana*).

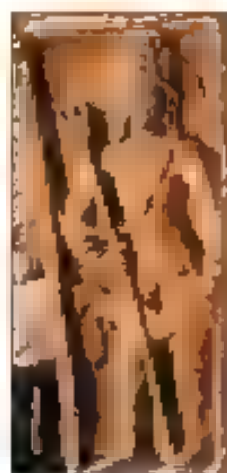
Indra, the Vedic God of the Heavens, sits on Airavata, the four-trunked white elephant representing the rain-cloud.

Female attendant

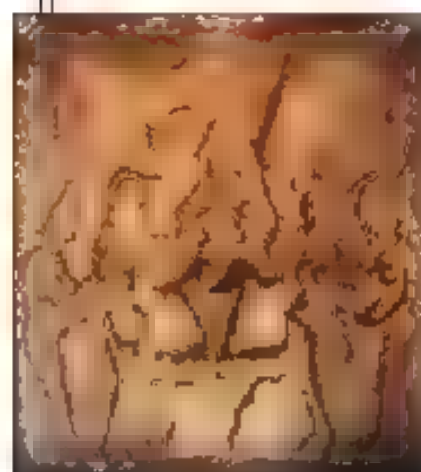
Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu

Garuda, the vehicle (*vahana*) of Vishnu, is half man and half eagle.

Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth appears as *Gajalakshmi* in this panel from Mamallapuram (see p579). She is seen with two elephants (*gaja*) who bathe her with their upturned trunks.



Dvarapala is the armed guardian who stands outside the entrance of the temple or by the door of the inner sanctum. These forbidding figures carry weapons to protect the deity from intruders.



Vishnu's dwarf incarnation Vamana (see p679) transforms himself into a giant to measure out the universe in three steps. This panel from Badami (see pp536–7) shows him with one leg raised skywards.



Mohini, the female form of Vishnu, is described as an enchantress. The most alluring maiden imaginable. Courtesans and nymphs are also carved as bracket figures.



VISHNU ANANTASAYANA

This 5th-century panel from Durgam (see p233) depicts Vishnu asleep on the serpent Ananta, whose hood shelters him. Brahma on a lotus rises from behind, while Shiva sits with Parvati on his *vahana*, the bull Nandi. Attendants and celestial beings surround the figure. The mace, discus, shield and sword, Vishnu's attributes, are personified below to ward off demons.



Brahma, the Creator, is part of the holy Trinity (Trimurti) of gods that also include Vishnu and Shiva. He is depicted with four heads, of which only three are usually visible, and holds a sceptre, a spoon, a string of beads and the Vedas. He is seen here with his consort Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning.



Shiva, the God of Destruction, is seated with his wife, Parvati, who represents his peaceful and domestic aspect. Shiva holds an elephant god and drum (damru), while Parvati has a lotus (kamal) in her hand.



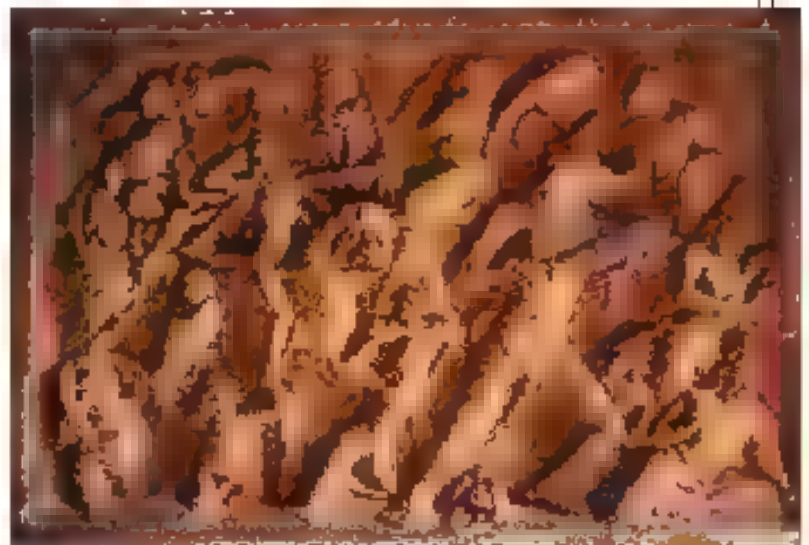
Shiva and Parvati

Flying celestial figure

Ananta, the Many Headed Serpent is also known as Adishesha

Vishnu, the Preserver

Attendants, the personifications of Vishnu's four attributes, protect the god from demons



Durga, the fierce form of gentle Parvati, slaying the buffalo-demon, Mahishasura. This panel from Manialla-puram, known as Mahishasuramardini, shows Durga riding a lion with a deadly weapon in each of her eight arms, given to her by the gods to annihilate the demon.

Karttikeya, Shiva's warrior son, has a peacock as his vahana. He is also known as Skanda, Subramanya and Murugan in South India. The other son of Shiva is Ganesha (see p467).



Devotees are often elevated to the status of saints and are honoured for their devotion to either Shiva or Vishnu. This 11th-century bronze is of a Shaivite boy saint holding cymbals in his hands.



Dancers, musicians and other performers, usually carved on the lower plinths of temples

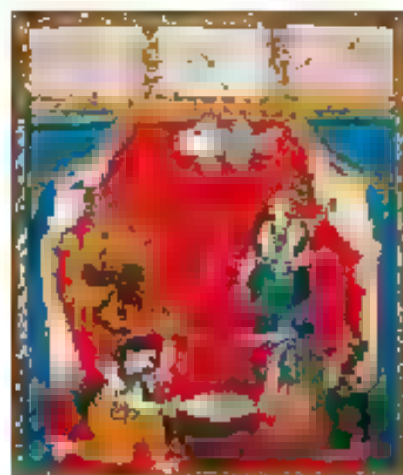
The Great Epics



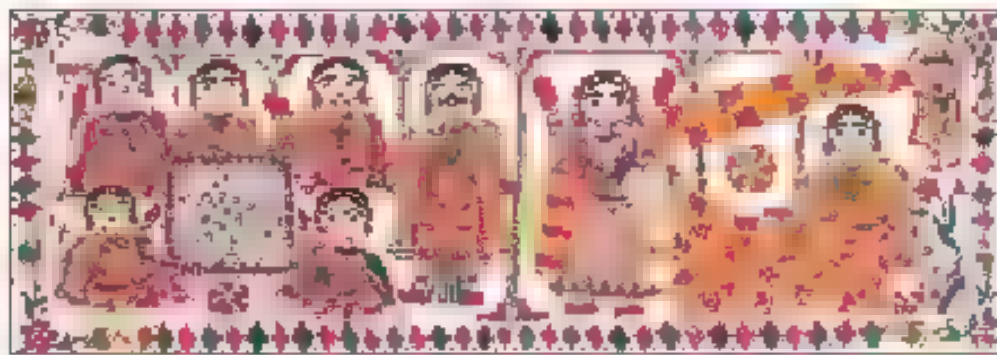
Pandava hero
on ganjifa card

The two great epic poems, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, have had an abiding impact on Indian culture and philosophy. Over the centuries, their stories have inspired a great deal of art, music, dance, theatre and, more recently, popular TV series. Containing a fund of wisdom about human behaviour, emotions and moral dilemmas, the epics continue to guide the daily lives

of millions of Indians. Though known in their oral form since at least 500 BC, they were only put into writing around the 4th century AD.



Arjuna's chariot
in the battle of Kurukshetra
where he fought against
the Kauravas, led by
Duryodhana, and won
the war.



In a game of dice
the Pandavas lost
their kingdom and
Draupadi. She was
subjected to a
public humiliation
by the Kauravas.
This event led to
the war.

THE MAHABHARATA

This epic recounts the rivalry between the five heroic Pandava brothers – Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakul and Sahadeva – and 100 members of the Kaurava clan, headed by Duryodhana, and culminates in a great battle. Several other fables, legends and discourses are woven into the main story, making the *Mahabharata* eight times longer than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together.



Forced into exile at the end of
the first Pandava war, all
of them for 13 years. In the
11th year, Arjuna lived in disguise as a
eunuch, giving dance lessons.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a sermon given to Arjuna by Lord Krishna, who acted as Arjuna's charioteer, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. It is a famous discourse on ethics and morality, that contains the essence of Hindu religion and philosophy.

In the final battle, the Kauravas created a cobweb-shaped defensive formation called the *chakravyuha*, inside which Arjuna's son was trapped and killed. However, on the 18th day of this fierce battle, the Pandavas, with Krishna's divine guidance, finally emerged victorious, and regained their kingdom, which they ruled with Draupadi as their queen.





THE RAMAYANA

Rama, the ideal hero, was prevented from becoming king of Ayodhya by the intrigues of his stepmother and sent into exile with his wife Sita and brother Lakshman. The demon-king, Ravana, abducted Sita, who was then rescued by the two brothers with the help of the monkey god, Hanuman. Rama is worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu (see p679).

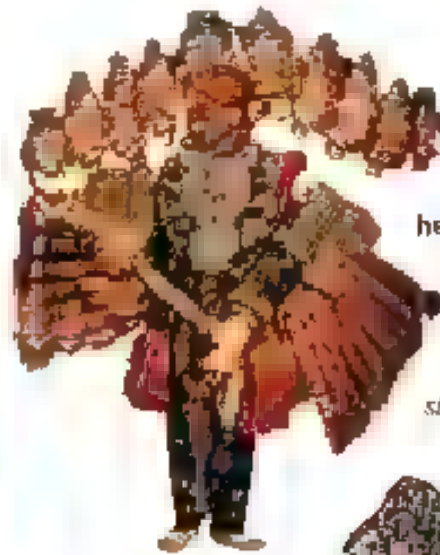
The wedding of Rama and Sita took place after Rama succeeded in breaking the great bow of Shiva which other suitors for her hand could not even manage to lift off the ground.



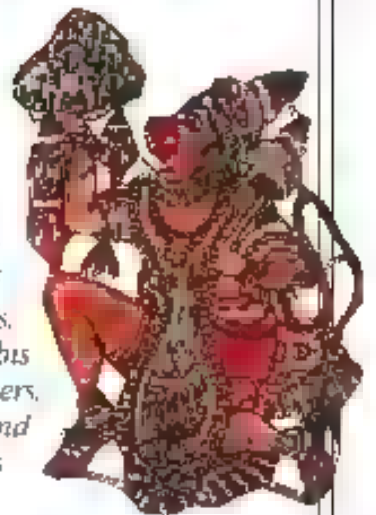
Exiled to the forest for 14 years, Rama, Sita and Lakshman lived simply and visited the hermitages of many holy sages.



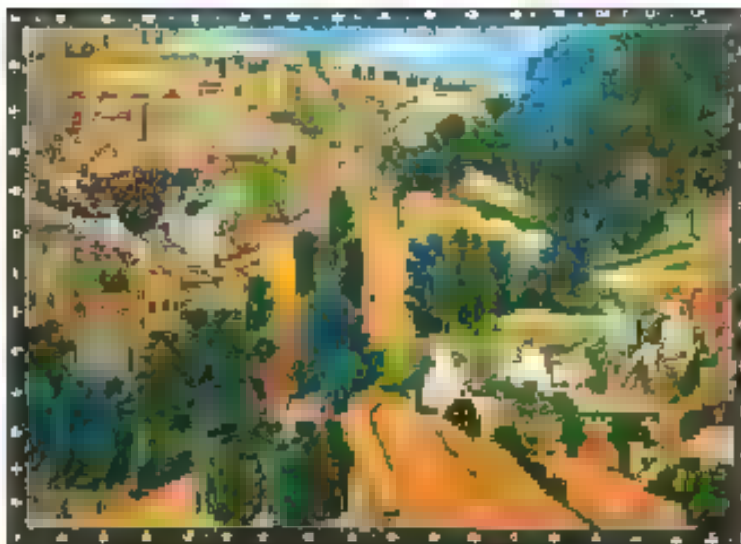
Sita was abducted from her forest hut by Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka, who came disguised as a mendicant. The brave vulture Jatayu tried to save her, but his wings were slashed by Ravana. However, Jatayu was able to tell Rama what had happened before he died.



Ravana's ten heads and 20 arms signify his great intellectual and physical strength.



Hanuman, the Monkey God, is a much-loved figure in the pantheon of Hindu gods, worshipped for his miraculous powers, his courage and physical prowess.

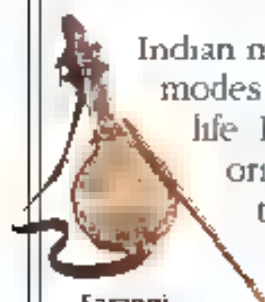


Ravana's palace at Lanka was attacked by Rama and Lakshman who, with the help of Hanuman and his army of monkeys, rescued Sita and killed Ravana. Lakshman was gravely wounded in the battle but saved by the magical mountain herb, Sanjivani, brought by Hanuman.



Rama's triumphant return to Ayodhya is celebrated in the festival of lights, Diwali (see p37), which symbolizes the victory of good over evil.

Classical Music and Dance



Sarangi
and bow

Indian music and dance are simultaneously modes of worship and a joyous celebration of life. Based on ancient codified texts, they originated as a form of worship in the temples, and gradually acquired a more secular character with royal patronage. Different regions of India have their own classical dance forms, while classical music is distinguished by two main styles – Hindustani and Carnatic (see p595), the latter specific to South India.

Kuchipudi is a highly dramatic dance form from Andhra Pradesh which often enacts scenes from the great epics

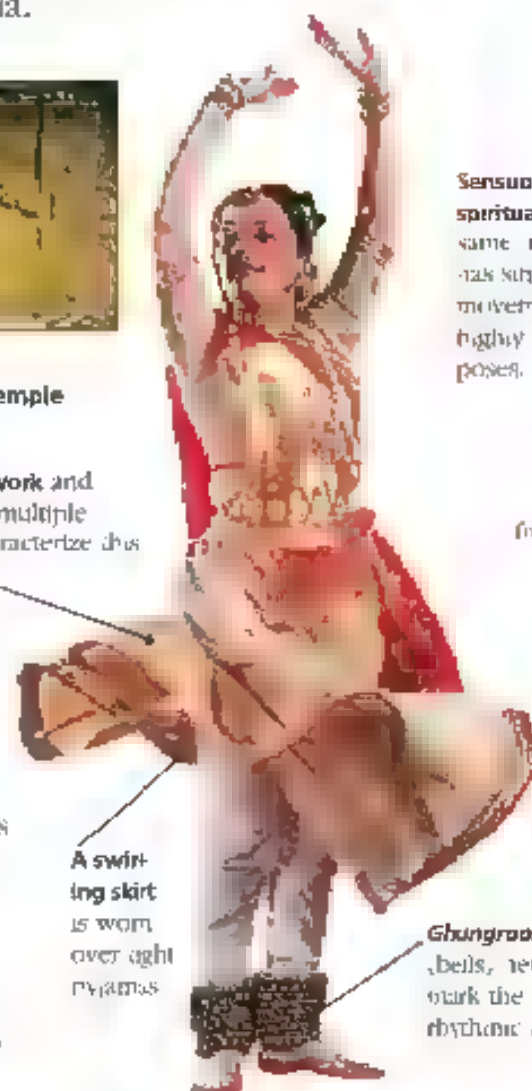


Frieze of a dancer from an 11th-century South Indian temple

Complex footwork and rhythms, and multiple pirouettes characterize this dance form.

CLASSICAL DANCE

A wide range of hand gestures, facial expressions and body postures codified in the *Natya shastra*, a 4th-century treatise, constitute the "language" of Indian classical dance forms. Their themes are mostly based on religious mythology and percussion and music play an important role.



A swirling skirt is worn over tight pyjamas.

Ghungroos (bells) help mark the rhythmic beat.

Kathak was a favourite dance at the royal courts of northern India.

The **tara** is shaped like a temple spire.

Sensuous and spiritual at the same time, Odissi has sinuous movements and highly sculptural poses.

Fan pleats decorate the front of the sari.

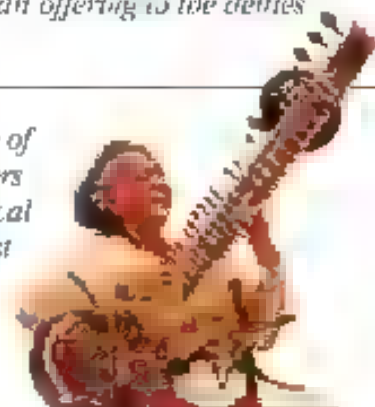


Odissi developed in the temples of Orissa as an offering to the deities.

HINDUSTANI MUSIC

The origins of Hindustani classical music date to about 3000 BC. The *raga* (melodic line) and the *tala* (rhythmic cycle) are its foundation, and there is no formal written score. This gives artists great latitude to improvise within the melodic framework of a raga. There are more than a 100 ragas, each assigned to a particular time of day or season according to the mood or images its melody evokes. Royal patrons founded different *gharanas* or schools of music, which have preserved their individuality by passing knowledge down orally from guru (teacher) to *shishya* (disciple).

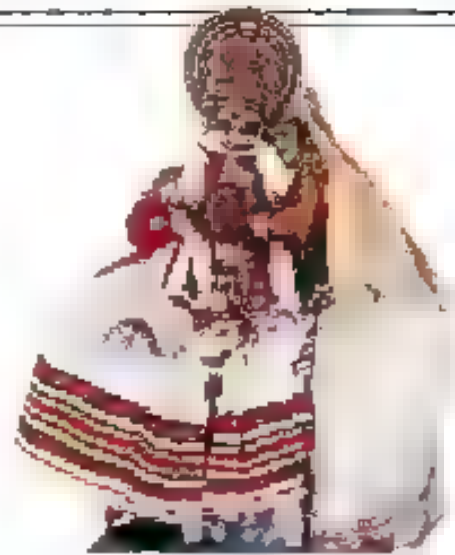
Ravi Shankar one of India's foremost star players introduced Indian classical music to the West.



Amjad Ali Khan plays the sarod, an instrument developed by his grandfather from the *rabab*, a medieval Central Asian lute.



Nine rasas (moods) are mentioned in the 4th-century treatise *Natya Shastra*. From the erotic, comic and pathetic to the odious, marvellous and quiescent, the rasas cover every mood and expression whether in music, dance or painting. This 17th-century miniature painting depicts the serene mood of the morning Raga *Tod*.



Kerala's Kathakali dance featuring spectacular masks (see p657)



Fresh flowers adorn the hair.

Elaborate jewellery

Red colour on the hands and feet draw attention to intricate movements.

Beautiful silk sari

Chiselled movements and symmetrical stances are typical of this dance form.

Bharat Natyam, from Tamil Nadu, has eloquent eye and hand movements (*mudras*).

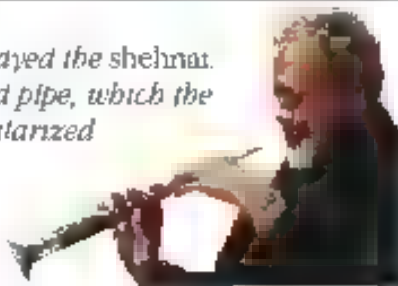


Diaphanous veil

Crinoline-like skirts and gentle swaying movements are typical of Manipuri dance.

Manipuri, from the northeast, enacts the legend of Radha and Krishna (see p179)

Bismillah Khan played the *shehnai*, a ceremonial reed pipe, which the late maestro popularized into a concert instrument.



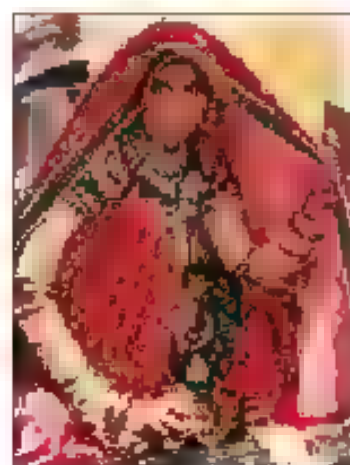
Zakir Hussain plays the *tabla*, a pair of drums that provide percussion at most music and dance performances.



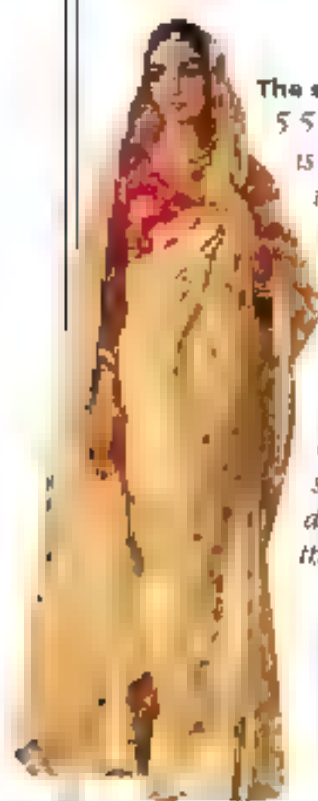
Kishori Amonkar is a leading singer. A concert usually begins with a slow evocation of the *raga*, followed by an elaboration of the melodic line, and culminating in a fast-paced climax.

Costumes of India

One of the most remarkable features of Indian apparel is the ingenious way in which a simple length of unstitched cloth is used. Gracefully draped as a sari, or wrapped around the head as a turban, the length of fabric is versatile, and is worn by both men and women. Stitched garments include the *kurta*, pyjama, sherwani, the voluminous skirt (*ghaghara* or *lehenga*), and of course, the trouser, shirt and ubiquitous blue jeans. Today, despite the growing influence of contemporary Western fashion trends, most Indians continue to dress traditionally. The sari, particularly, is still worn all over India, even though the style of draping it differs from region to region.



The Veil (*odhni* or *dupatta*) is an essential part of dress in conservative societies



The sari, usually 5.5 m (6 yd.) long, is tied around the waist with the pleats tucked into an under skirt. The *pa-lav* (end piece) is either drawn over the left shoulder or draped over the head.

Safa (turban)

Angavastram is the unstitched mantle draped over the shoulder.

Sari blouse

Sari



THE INDIAN WEDDING

Festivals and weddings are glittering events that showcase the range and variety of clothes worn by both men and women in India. Such occasions are what keep traditional customs and attire alive today.

Bracelet-like folds of the *churidar*

Salwar-kameez, consisting of a baggy pyjama (*salwar*) a loose tunic (*kameez*) and *dupatta*, are worn by women in Punjab. This outfit is now worn all over India.



Maharashtrian women wear 8 m (9 yd.) saris in a style very similar to a *dhoti*. The extra fabric is pleated in front, drawn between the legs and tucked in at the back to allow freedom of movement.



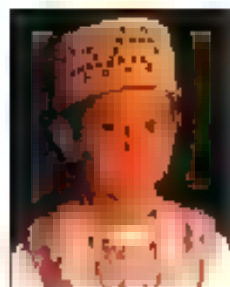
In Kerala, women wear a two-piece sari (*mundu-veshti*), of which the *mundu* forms the lower garment, while the *veshti* is tucked into the waist to form the *pa-lav*. Men just wear the lower garment with an *angavastram*.



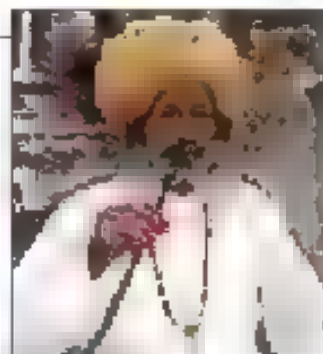
HEADRESSES

For Indian men, the most important accessory is the turban.

(*pagri* or *safa*), an unstitched length of cloth that is deftly tied around the head. More than just a fashion statement, the turban's style and colour also indicates the wearer's social, religious, caste and regional status. Rajasthani turbans are intrinsic to the cultural ethos of the land whereas in Punjab, the Sikh turban is characteristic of their identity as a martial community (see p103). From the mid-19th century onwards, *topis* (caps) became popular, especially among courtiers in the Muslim courts. Even today, men wear plain or ornamental caps in mosques or during festivals.



Topi, worn by a young Muslim boy



A turbaned patriarch from Jodhpur, Rajasthan

Choli (tight-fitting blouse)

Odhni (veil)

Kurta



The bridegroom wears a formal sherwani-churidar in ivory silk.

The bride's *lehenga* is red silk heavily encrusted with gold embroidery.

The *dhoti-kurta* is the traditional male attire and comprises a *dhoti* (dian cloth) or lungi, either tied around the waist or tucked between the legs. The upper garment is the stitched, long-sleeved kurta.



Sherwani, a long coat with a high collar, is worn above the *churidar* pyjama, so-called because of the bracelet (*churri*) like folds near the ankles.



In Manipur, women wear the sarong-like phanek, while men wear a garment known as the khudi. Each tribe, however, is identified by its distinctive colours and stripes. This couple is from the Paite tribe.



Ghaghara, the ankle-length gathered skirt worn in Rajasthan and Gujarat is tied with a drawstring. A *choli* (tight-fitting blouse) is worn on top, while the *odhni* has one end tucked into the waistband and the other taken over the right shoulder to cover the head.

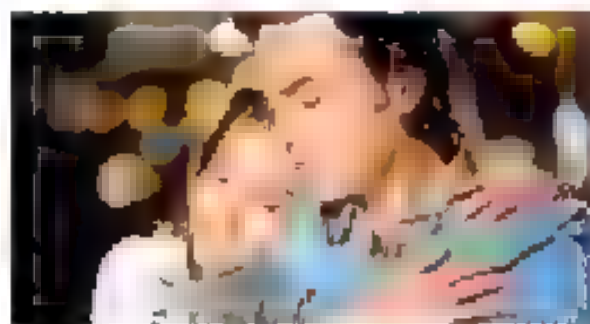
Bollywood's Magic Formula

Hindi films from Bollywood (Bombay or Mumbai) are a fascinating mix of romance, violence, comedy, and tragedy, interspersed with song and dance sequences, and with a clear social or moral message. Ever since its inception in 1899, fashions in Bollywood have swung from mythological epics to action thrillers to family dramas. But the basic (and spicy mix) formula, which appeals to a large and diverse audience, remains unchanged.

Heroines add an essential touch of glamour. Slim, fashionable and gorgeously dressed film stars, such as Miss World 1994 Aishwarya Rai, set the standard for feminine beauty and grace.



Star-studded, high-budget films usually ensure a box-office hit.



Romance trickles down into almost every plot that a film explores. The hero wooing the heroine always forms a very popular sequence.



Abhishek Bachchan is among India's top young actors.

The hero cult and Shah Rukh Khan are synonymous. Affectionately called King Khan, he is popular both in India and abroad, even boasting a wax statue at Madame Tussaud's in London. Aishwarya Rai and superstar An-Jahh Bachchan share the honour with him.

THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

It costs anywhere between US\$1.75 million and \$30 million to produce a Bollywood film. The budget is spent on massive fees for the stars, exotic locations, special effects, and on huge promotional campaigns. Of the more than 100 films produced every year, some are dubbed into regional Indian languages, or subtitled in English for international audiences.

Song and dance sequences range from duets between the hero and heroine to spectacular set pieces with lots of male and female dancers. These are released before the film as music videos for TV, and often become hits, even if the film flops at the box office.





Family values form the core of most films. The home can be the scene of great happiness or discord, and in the end everyone comes together.



Villains are portrayed as evil incarnate in *Om Kara* (2006), which was based on Shakespeare's *Othello*. The villain is a loyalist turned traitor who seeks to avenge himself at the cost of many innocent lives.



Violence can often be of the comic book variety. Dramatic fights are staged between the hero and villain at the climax, and invariably end with the triumph of good over evil.

Fashion statements made by Bollywood stars inspire youngsters to follow suit.

The hero usually anchors the film, with the plot and other characters revolving around him. Hrithik Roshan is one of Bollywood's most sought-after stars, with electric good looks and a powerful physique that have earned him a huge fan following.

Ashwarya Rai as the heroine represents the fun-loving, urban, Westernized youth.

NEW WAVE CINEMA

In the 1950s and 60s parallel or "art" cinema was dominated by Satyajit Ray (see p260), whose thought-provoking films portrayed everyday life in Indian villages and small towns. By focusing on realism and social issues rather than fantasy and entertainment, he paved the way for internationally acclaimed directors such as Deepa Mehta and Mira Nair to make films that made an impact on society.



Deepa Mehta with the star cast of her Oscar-nominated film *Water*



Youth, the prime focus of Bollywood films, saw a paradigm shift with *Rang De Basanti* (2006), a commercial film that didn't just set fashion trends but made a case for a better society with the participation of the younger generation.

INDIA THROUGH THE YEAR

Indians love celebrations and the year is filled with innumerable fairs and festivals. Almost every day marks a religious or social event celebrated by the diverse religious or local communities, where ritual fasting and feasting go hand in hand. Some festivals are linked to the pantheon of gods and goddesses, others follow the changing seasons and mark pastoral occasions. Some

commemorate anniversaries and events of national importance such as the Republic Day (see p75). Hindu festivals usually follow the lunar calendar and both the full moon (*purnima*) and the new moon (*pradosh*) are considered auspicious. Muslim festivals, too, are determined by the new moon. This means that the dates of most religious festivals vary from year to year. See also special festival columns in each chapter.



Orchids in full bloom



Holi celebrations in the area around Mathura

SPRING (FEB-MAR)

From Mid-February to the end of March, spring (*Basant*) is India's most glorious season with flowers in full bloom and pleasant, not-too-hot temperatures. It is also the main season for weddings, parades, cricket matches, horse racing, flower shows and other events.

Basant Panchami (*Feb*)

Considered to be the first day of spring, *Basant* is celebrated all over North India. People dress in shades of yellow, echoing the yellow mustard blossoms that are in bloom. In Eastern India, the same day is celebrated as *Saraswati puja*, honouring the Goddess of Learning and Wisdom.

Vasantahabba (*Feb*),

Nityagram. One of Bangalore's most awaited dance festivals. Acclaimed artistes from all over India

perform from dusk till dawn.

Elephanta Festival (*Feb*),

Elephanta Island. An open air festival of classical dance and music, with performances by renowned artistes.

Kala Ghoda Festival (*Feb*),

Mumbai. A two-week extravaganza of the visual and performing arts is held in Mumbai's main cultural district of Kala Ghoda. The National Gallery of Modern Art and the Jehangir Art Gallery, as well as the area's sidewalks, become venues for sitar and tabla performances, dance recitals and exhibitions of paintings, prints, photographs and installation art.

Nishagandhi Dance Festival (*Feb*),

Thiruvananthapuram. Artises of almost all classical dance

forms perform at the open air Nishagandhi Auditorium.

Shivratri (*Feb/Mar*)

Devotees of Shiva observe the night of his celestial wedding to Parvati.

Delhi Dhrupad Samaroh

(*Mar*). Delhi. Leading exponents of Dhrupad, a classical musical tradition, present a series of recitals.

Holi (*Mar*). One of the most important Hindu festivals.

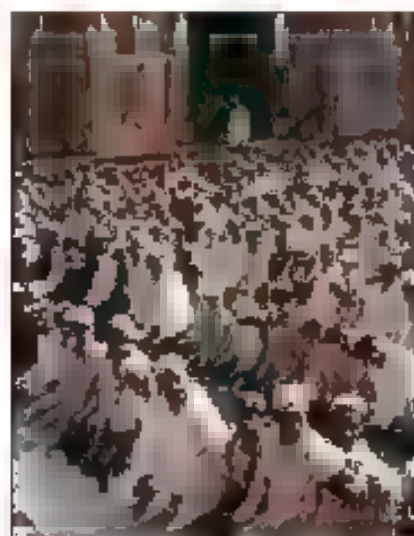
Holi takes place on a full moon night and marks the end of winter. On the eve of Holi, bonfires are lit and an effigy of the demon Holika is burnt to signify the triumph of good over evil. The next day, people swarm the streets, sprinkling coloured water and powder (*gulal*) on each other. This exuberant festival is especially dear to Lord Krishna, and around Mathura, his birthplace (see p178), it is celebrated with great abandon.

Nauchandi Mela (*Mar*)

Meerut. Held around the shrine of a Muslim saint and, at the temple, this fair has come



Show jumping at the Delhi Horse Show



Namazaaz (prayers) being offered during Id-ul-Zuha

to symbolize Hindu-Muslim unity. Its origins date to the late 17th century when local leaders decided to merge festivities held concurrently at both shrines. Today, this is more a fun-filled carnival than a religious event.

Jamshed-e-Navroz (Mar) Celebrated by the Parsi community as their New Year's Day, the festival is named after the Persian king Jamshed, who is believed to have first introduced the solar calendar. Devotees visit fire-temples and make offerings of sandalwood. **Ramnavami** (Mar) Nine days of fasting (*navaratris*), precede the birth of the hero-god Rama (see p27) on Ramnavami (the ninth day). During this period, many Hindu households maintain a strict vegetarian diet, and prepare special food cooked in ghee (clarified butter) without garlic or onions.

International Film Festival of Kerala (Mar/Apr), Kerala. This event invites films from around the world, in categories such as world cinema, short films, documentary and Malayalam cinema.

Shankar Lal Sangeet Sammelan (Mar/Apr), Delhi. This is the capital's oldest classical vocal and instrumental music festival.

Delhi Horse Show (Mar/Apr), Delhi. A two-day sporting event, where thoroughbred horses from all over the country take part in show-jumping, tent pegging and dressage events.

Four Square White-Water Rafting Challenge

(Mar/Apr), Rishikesh. The premier white-water rafting event in India, this is also one of the richest competitions in the world with a cash prize of US\$25,000. **Mahavira Jayanti** (Mar/Apr) Jains celebrate the birth of the founder of Jainism, Mahavira (see p396). This is celebrated on a large scale in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Devotees offer prayers to the 24 *tirthankaras*.

Milad-ul-Nabi (Mar/Apr) Prophet Mohammed's birthday is observed with prayers and readings from the holy Koran.

SUMMER (APR-JUN)

From early April, until June, the northern plains, and much of the south, undergo a hot and dry summer. By May and June, the heat in the north builds up to a scorching 40° C (104° F) and above – a signal, for those who can afford it to move up to the hill stations in the Himalayas. Meanwhile, temperatures in the Deccan Plateau and the south rise to about 38° C (100° F). Most festivities come to a halt.

Baisakhi (13 Apr) This festival heralds the harvest season in the north.

Himachal Hang Gliding Rally (May), Kangra. An

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

Republic Day (26 Jan)
Independence Day (15 Aug)
Gandhi Jayanti (2 Oct)

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Id-ul-Zuha (Dec)
Shivratri (Feb, Mar)
Holi (Mar)
Good Friday (Mar/Apr)
Baisakhi (13 April)
Ramnavami (Mar)
Mahavira Jayanti (Mar/Apr)
Milad-ul-Nabi (Mar, Apr)
Buddha Jayanti (May)
Janmashtami (Aug, Sep)
Dussehra (Sep, Oct)
Diwali (Oct/Nov)
Guru Parab (Nov)
Christmas (25 Dec)

international competition that draws professionals from around the world.

Buddha Jayanti (May). The Buddha was born, attained enlightenment and died

on the full moon of the fourth lunar month. Buddhists gather in *viharas* for prayers.

International Flower Festival (May), Gangtok. A rare show of exotic flowering plants

found in Sikkim, including a most 500 varieties of orchids.

NSD Repertory Festival (May/Jun), Delhi. This all-India festival is organized by the National School of Drama.



Symbol of National School of Drama



Procession of Buddhist lamas on Buddha Jayanti



Women teams participating in the Nehru Trophy Boat Race, Kerala

MONSOON (JUL-SEP)

July, August and September make up the monsoon season, celebrated in India for the magical transformation of the earth. The south, especially the coastal areas, and the northeast, experience very heavy rains. Rainfall is fairly scanty in the northern plains, which remain hot and humid.

International Mango Festival (Jul), Delhi. Held at the peak of the mango season, over 1,000 varieties of mangoes grown in North India are exhibited and sold at the T. A. Katora Stadium.

Kanwar Mela (Jul-Aug), Haridwar. The largest religious congregation after the Kumbh Mela (see p211). Thousands of Kanwarias (Shiva devotees), converge for a dip in the Ganges. During this period, devotees are seen travelling by cycle and on foot, carrying gaily decorated *kanwars* (vessels hung on bamboo poles).

Independence Day (15 Aug). This is a national holiday, commemorating India's freedom from British rule in 1947. The Prime Minister addresses the nation from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort in Delhi.

Raksha Bandhan (Aug). Young girls tie sacred threads (*rakhis*) on their brothers' wrists as a token of love, and receive in exchange gifts and a promise of everlasting protection.

Bangalore Flower Show

(Aug). Bangalore. A spectacular flower show is held in the Glass House of the Lalbagh Gardens.

Nehru Trophy Boat Race

(Aug), Kerala. About 40 lavishly decorated snake boats (see p633) take part in a thrilling race at Aappuzha.

Janmashtami

(Aug/Sep).

The birth of Lord Krishna is celebrated with abandon. Festivities reach their peak at midnight, while the day is given to fasting. The merrymaking in Mathura (see p178) and Brindavan (see p179) is especially grand.



A gaudy modern day *rakh*

grow cooler. It is also the most auspicious period in the Indian calendar and ushers in a number of festivals. Winter also marks the sowing of crops such as mustard and wheat. The chill is at its worst in the northern plains and hills between mid-December and mid-January, and though temperatures often fall below 3° C (37° F), the days are sunny. The southern region does not experience very low winter temperatures, the minimum being around 19° C (66° F).

Dussehra (Sep-Oct). For nine days, episodes from the *Ramayana* (see p27) depicting Rama's adventures against Ravana are enacted.

The tenth day, Vijaya Dashami, celebrates Rama's defeat of Ravana, and huge effigies of the demon-king, his brother and son are burnt. In Delhi, the

Shri. in Alaraya Kala Kendra's month-long dance-drama encapsulates the epic.

Bengalis celebrate Durga Puja (see p281) at this time.

Gandhi Jayanti (2

Oct). Mahatma Gandhi's birthday is widely celebrated as a national holiday.

Id-ul-Fitr (Oct). This festival marks the end of Ramzan or Ramadan, the 40-day long period of fasting for Muslims that marks the period when the Prophet received the message of the Koran from Allah. The actual day varies

WINTER (OCT-FEB)

This is the most perfect season. The monsoon is over, and the days now begin to



Huge effigies of Ravana and his son during Dussehra, Delhi

according to the sightings of the new moon. A special *namaaz* is held at Delhi's Jamī Masjid. It is also called *Mithū* (sweet) *Id*, as *sewian*, a delicacy made with sweetened vermicelli, is prepared on the occasion.

Diwali (Oct/Nov) Oil lamps illuminate each home to commemorate Rama's return to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile. Firecrackers are lit and sweets exchanged. Every

locality holds Diwali *melas*.

Pushkar Fair (Oct/Nov)

Pushkar, Asia's largest camel, horse and cattle fair takes place in this pilgrim town.

Guru Parab (Nov) On the first full moon night after Diwali, Sikhs celebrate the birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

Prithvi International Theatre Festival (Nov)

Mumbai. Prithvi Theatre is one of Mumbai's best known theatres. This week-long festival brings international theatre groups to the city, who perform a variety of contemporary plays, along with a handful of Indian theatre groups.

International Trade Fair (14-21 Nov), Delhi. In this major event for Indian industry, goods manufactured in India and abroad are exhibited at Pragati Maidan. Cultural events are also held in the fair grounds.

International Film Festival of India (Nov/Dec), Goa. India's premier film event, showcasing state-of-the-art films by Indian as well as international directors.

Madras Music Festival (Dec), Chennai. The city celebrates its rich heritage of Carnatic music and dance with recitals by numerous well-known artistes.

Id-ul-Zuha (Dec) The Muslim feast of sacrifice popularly known as Bakr Id, commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son, Ismail. Since then a goat is sacrificed to Allah



Immaculate vintage cars at the Kolkata rally

on this day, prayers are offered in mosques and special delicacies are served.

Mamallapuram Dance

Festival (Jan/Feb), Mamallapuram. Leading Indian classical dancers, perform Bharat Natyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali and Odissi against a backdrop of the famous Pallava rock-cut sculptures.

Lohri (13 Jan), Punjab. Bonfires and merriment mark what is believed to be the coldest day in winter.

Makar Sankranti

(14 Jan)

Japur. Kites are

flown to

celebrate the return

of the sun from the

Equator to the Tropic

of Capricorn. This day

coincides with the

Tamil festival of

Pongal (see p589).

Republic Day (26 Jan) A

national holiday. Pomp and

pageantry mark India's birth

as an independent republic.

In Delhi, a colourful military

parade is held at Rajpath.

Beating of the Retreat (29

Jan), Delhi. This beautiful

ceremony recalls the end of the day's battle when armies retreated to their camps.

A grand display of regiments, bands perform against the spectacular backdrop of North and South Blocks.

As the sun sets,

a bugle sounds

the retreat, fireworks are lit and the buildings are framed with fairy lights.

Vintage and Classic Car

Rally (Jan), Kolkata. The

Statesman group of news

papers organizes this event

when vintage cars, or the

"grand old ladies", are

flagged off on a short race.

Their owners often dress up

in period costumes. A similar

rally is held in Delhi, in

March each year.

Thyagaraja Aradhana

Festival (Jan), Thiruvaiyaru.

An eight-day music festival is

held in honour of the saint

composer Thyagaraja, attract-

ing eminent musicians from

all over the country.

Island Tourism Festival

(Jan/Feb), Port Blair. A ten-

day festival of dance, theatre

and music reflects the

multi-cultural population of

the Andaman Islands. There

are also exhibitions of hand-

crafts, flora and marine life.

Desert Festival (Jan/Feb),

Jaisalmer. A cultural festival,

held on the sand dunes over

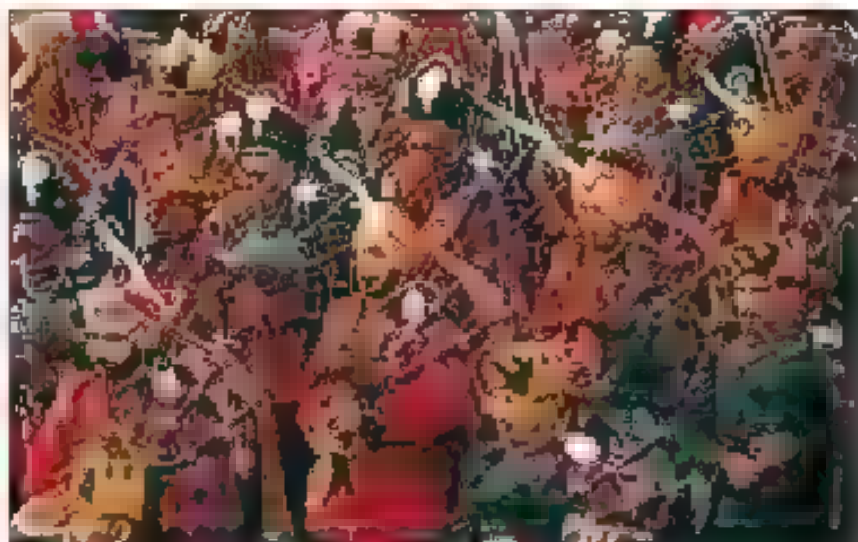
three days, with camel races,

camel polo, folk dances and

music performances.



Decorative paper kite



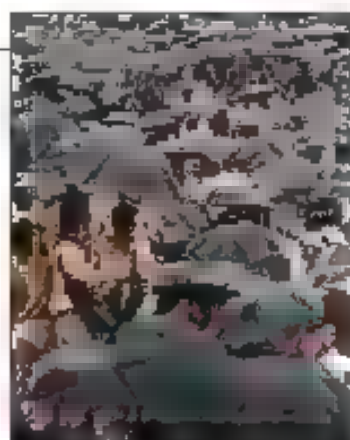
Bagpipers of an army regiment at the Beating of the Retreat ceremony

The Climate of India

Summer, monsoon and winter, with a brief but glorious spring and autumn, span the seasons in India. The climate changes with latitude and geographical location. In the north, temperatures soar in the vast Gangetic Plains, though the Himalayan belt remains pleasantly cool in summer. In winter, the high mountain passes remain snowbound. The central Deccan and deep south, however, have a tropical monsoon climate, with high temperatures and virtually no winter. India's coastal belts, on the other hand, remain humid and warm, with torrential rain. The semi-arid regions of Rajasthan and Kutch, as well as the rain shadow areas east of the Western Ghats, are among the country's worst drought hit areas, while the coasts and the northeast states face the full onslaught of the monsoon and are devastated by cyclones and floods each year.

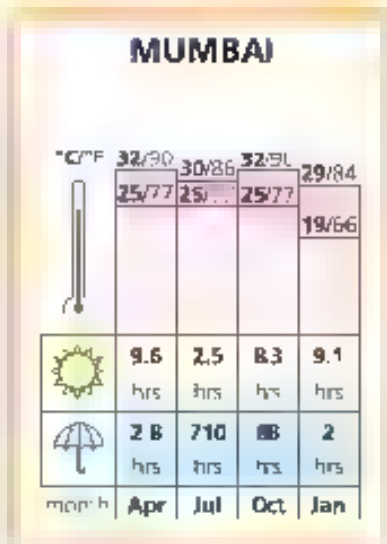
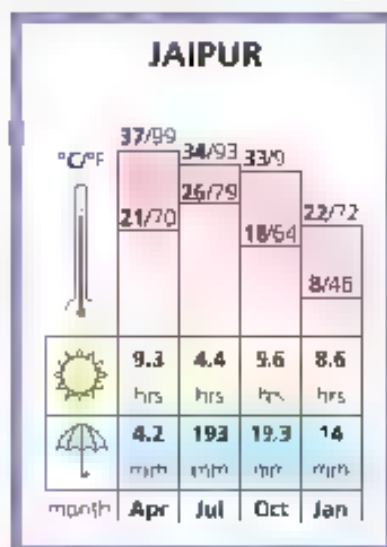
KEY

- ☐ Tropical rainy region: consistently high temperatures and heavy summer rainfall
- ☐ Humid subtropical region: hot summer followed by heavy rainfall. Dry winter
- ☐ Tropical savannah region: long, dry season with high summer temperatures. Mild winter
- ☐ Tropical and subtropical steppe region: semi-arid, low and erratic rainfall leading to drought
- ☐ Tropical desert region: high summer and very low winter temperatures. Scanty rainfall
- ☐ Mountain region: cold and dry climate. Short summer
- ☐ Mountain region: cold, humid winter. Short summer

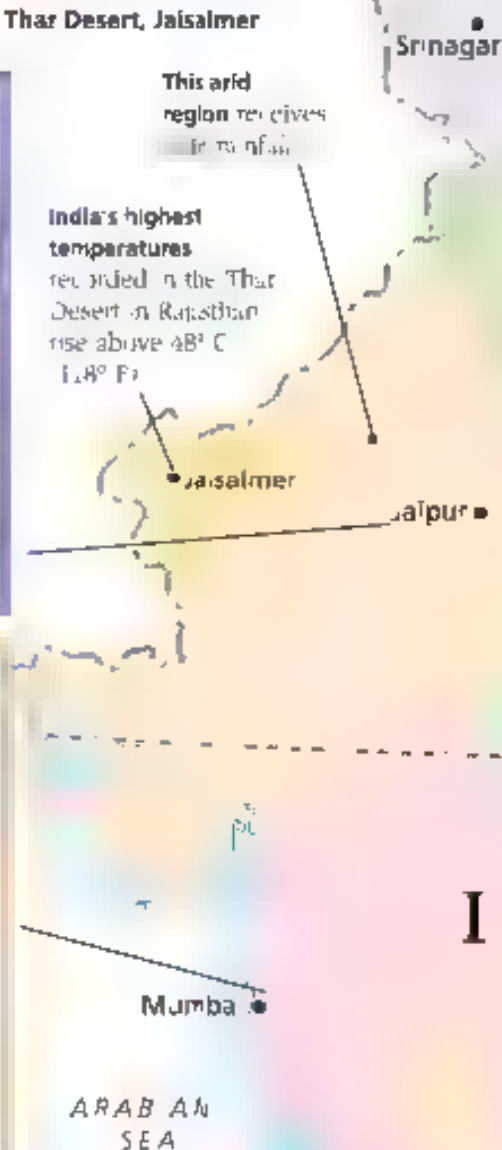


Torrential showers typify Kerala's monsoon

coast of Tamil Nadu receive heavy rain. Nothing in India is awaited more eagerly than these annual rains, and songs and poems celebrate the months of Sawan and Bhadon (July and August) as a time of renewal and hope.



Giant cacti growing in the arid Thar Desert, Jaisalmer



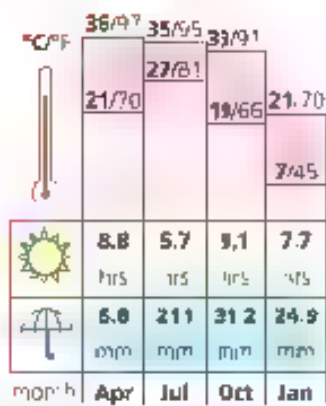
THE MONSOON

The word monsoon, from the Arabic *mawsim* (season), refers to South Asia's seasonal moisture-laden winds. In India, the Southwest Monsoon hits Kerala in end May. Simultaneously, one branch sweeps across the Bay of Bengal towards the Eastern Himalayas and the northeast, while the other deflected westwards by the vast Himalayan barrier moves towards the Gangetic Plains and gradually spreads across the mainland. At the end of September the Southwest Monsoon begins to retreat southwards, and during October and November southern Andhra Pradesh and the eastern

Lakshadweep Islands

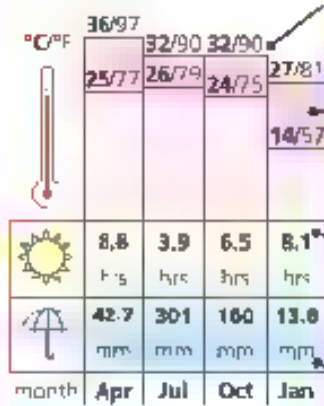
Thiruvananthapuram

DELHI



The lowest temperatures are recorded in the Himalayan belt averaging below 10° (50° F)

KOLKATA



Average monthly maximum temperature

Average monthly minimum temperature

Average daily hours of sunshine

Average monthly rainfall



Bhojpatra (birch) trees in the alpine meadows, Kashmir Valley

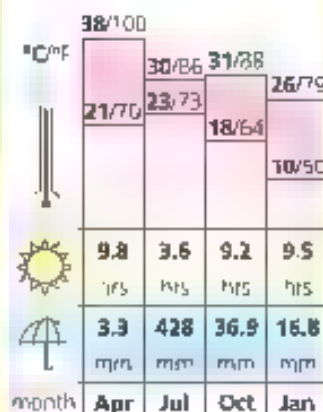
Cherrapunji and Mawsynram in Meghalaya are the two wettest places on earth, recording an average of 1142 cm (450 inches) of rainfall per year and up to 104 cm (41 inches) on a single day

Cherrapunji

Tropic of Cancer

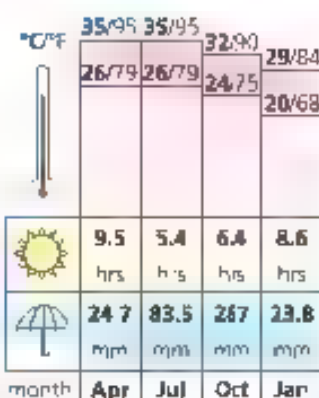
Kolkata

BHOPAL



The eastern coast receives winter rainfall from the retreating South west monsoon

CHENNAI



0 km 250

0 miles 250

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

INDIA

BAY OF BENGAL

Hyderabad

Chennai

Delhi

Bhopal



THE HISTORY OF INDIA

The name India comes from "Indoi", a Greek word for the people who lived beyond the Indus river. The roots of Indian civilization lie in the country's precise and awesome natural boundaries, formed by the Himalayas in the north and seas to the east, south and west. These have fostered a remarkable physical and cultural unity, despite the size and diversity of the area they enclose.

INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

Prehistoric sites in India date back to at least 250,000 BC, with agricultural settlements appearing around 7000 BC. By 2500 BC, a sophisticated urban civilization emerged, stretching across the Indus Valley and northwest India, all the way down to Gujarat. Its main cities were marked by solid brick structures, roads in a grid pattern, and elaborate drainage systems. Stone seals with an as yet undeciphered script, and standardized weights and measures were among the artifacts found in this culture (also known as Harappan Civilization), which had a thriving trade with Mesopotamia. Remains of two of these cities can be seen at Lothal and Dholavira in Gujarat. By 1800 BC, these cities declined, perhaps because of tectonic or ecological changes.



Dancing girl,
2500 BC




and agrarian economy. Three later Vedas, written between 1000–600 BC and associated Sanskrit texts, record the extension of their settlements across the Gangetic Valley. This was also the time of the *Mahabharata* epic (see p26), which describes a great war between two clans.

While the Rig Vedic religion worshipped nature gods, the deities of the later Vedic period were more complex. Later Vedic literature included a remarkable set of Sanskrit treatises called the *Upanishads*, which advocated a philosophical quest for truth, through enquiry. By this period, a social structure based on the caste system had developed. It was earlier occupational, but was now becoming hereditary and increasingly rigid. At the apex were the Brahmins or priests, followed by the *kshatriyas* (rulers and warriors). Below them were *vaishyas* (farmers and traders), and *shudras* (servants and labourers). Sacrifices and rituals to appease the gods were prescribed by the Vedas, and became a part of daily life.

THE VEDIC AGE

Around 1500 BC, a people commonly known as Aryans, who were probably migrants from Central Asia, settled in the Indus region. Described in the *Rig Veda*, a Sanskrit text of that period, they had a mixed pastoral

TIMELINE

<p>early Stone Age relics</p>  <p>8000–4000 BC Mesolithic or Intermediate Stone Age</p>	<p>6000–1000 BC Neolithic or New Stone Age</p> <p>7000 BC</p>  <p>2500–1800 BC Harappan culture flourishes in the Indus Valley</p> <p>1800–800 BC Farming communities emerge</p>	<p>1500 BC Aryans migrate to northwest areas</p> <p>6000</p>	<p>1000–600 BC Later Vedic Age Painted Grey Ware and iron used</p> <p>1000</p> <p>1200 BC Iron discovered</p> <p>950 BC Mahabharata war supposed to have been fought</p> <p>1500–1000 BC Period of the Rig Veda</p>	 <p>Megalithic stone dolmens South India</p> <p>900</p> <p>1000 BC–AD100 Megalithic grave sites in southern India</p>
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◀ Miniature painting of the Battle of Panipat, 1526, which established the Mughal dynasty in India

THE AGE OF MAHAVIRA AND BUDDHA

The 6th century BC saw the rise of several urban centres in the north accompanied by widespread trade. Urbanization led to changes in social stratification, and encouraged the emergence of new religious sects which challenged Brahmin dominance. Chief among these were Buddhism and Jainism, founded respectively by Gautama Siddhartha (566–486 BC) who became the Buddha, and Vardhamana Mahavira (540–467 BC). These religions gained popularity as they had neither caste nor sacrifice, and were open to everyone, including women. The Buddha's simple yet profound teachings (*see p221*) had particularly wide appeal. Mahavira believed in an ascetic life accompanied by truth and non-acquisitiveness (*see p396*). Both religions disregarded god, discussed the laws of the universe, and advocated ahimsa – not harming any living being. Merchants, traders and others who adopted these religions gained new social status.

THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

The first empire in India was founded in 321 BC when Chandragupta Maurya, an unknown adventurer, defeated the ruling Nanda dynasty of Magadha (in Bihar) and established an empire extending down to the Narmada river in the Deccan. Chandragupta's grandson Ashoka (269–232 BC) became one of India's greatest rulers, extending the Mauryan Empire to reach from Afghanistan to Karnataka. But after his bloody conquest of Kalinga (*see p309*), Ashoka gave up violence and



Lion capital of Ashokan pillar



Ajanta painting of the Buddha with a monk

became a great patron of Buddhism. He recorded his ethical code on rocks and pillars all over his vast empire, enjoining his subjects to respect others' religions, give liberally to charity and avoid the killing of animals. These edicts were written in the Brahmi script, from which most Indian scripts have evolved. Ashoka also built many stupas enshrining Buddhist relics, including the one at Sanchi (*see pp244–5*).

CENTRAL ASIAN INVADERS

After Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire soon declined. Local kingdoms arose across North India, while from the northwest a series of invaders, all from Central Asia, established successive dynasties. These included

TIMELINE

566–486 BC Age of Buddha	327–325 Alexander the Great invades northwest India but soon retreats	321 BC Accession of Chandragupta Maurya, founder of Mauryan dynasty	269–232 BC Ashoka's reign	189–75 BC Rule of Sunga dynasty
500 BC	400 BC	300 BC	200 BC	100 BC
540–467 BC Age of Mahavira	Jain votive plaque from Mathura	315 BC Megasthenes, the Greek writer, visits India	260 BC Ashoka's conquest of Kalinga (now Orissa)	165 BC Menander Indo-Greek king, rules in northwest India 100 BC–AD 220 Rule of Satavahans in Deccan

the Indo-Greeks from Bactria (200–80 BC), the Scythians or Shakas with many branches (from 80 BC), the Parthians (1st century AD), and the Kushanas (AD 50–300). The territory of Kanishka, the greatest Kushana king, covered the northwest, Kashmir, and most of the Gangetic Valley. He too was a patron of Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism developed at this time, reflected in two great schools of art, with Buddha sculptures in the Graeco-Roman Gandhara style in the northwest and in a more indigenous style at Mathura.

As the Kushanas declined, the Gupta dynasty emerged in northern India, to establish another great empire (AD 320–500). The Gupta period saw a great cultural flowering, with fine sculptures, classical Sanskrit poetry and drama, and learned treatises on mathematics and astronomy produced at this time. In religion the two Hindu sects of Vaishnavism and Shaivism (followers of Vishnu and Shiva) became prominent, and the Buddhist university of Nalanda was established (*see pp218–19*). But inroads by the Huns, marauding tribes from Central Asia, contributed to the decline of the Guptas after AD 450.

The next major empire was established by Harsha (AD 606–647) at Kanauj. His long and enlightened rule is described by the Chinese traveller Hsien Tsang (*see p219*).

RULERS IN THE SOUTH

Meanwhile, in the Deccan region, numerous dynasties arose after the decline of the Mauryas. They included the Satavahanas (100

BC–AD 220), and the Ikshvakus (AD 225–310) in the eastern Deccan, under whom Buddhist stupas were constructed at Amravati (*see p675*) and Nagarjunakonda (*see p676*). Another Deccan dynasty were the Vakatakas (AD 250–550), during whose reign many of the superb sculptures and paintings at Ajanta (*see pp479–81*) were made. In the western Deccan, the Chalukyas came to power and built great temples at Badami (*see pp536–7*), Pattadakal (*see pp538–9*) and Aihole (*see pp540–41*). Their most powerful ruler, Pulakeshin II (AD 608–642), defeated Harsha, and stopped his southward advance.

In the far south, the three kingdoms of the Cheras (now Kerala), Cholas and Pandyas ruled between 400 BC and AD 400. The people of this region were of non-Aryan origin and were known as Dravids. Another major dynasty in the south were the early Pallavas, who ruled from AD 275–550, with their capital at Kanchipuram. During these centuries, cities, craft guilds, and in and foreign trade flourished across India. The South Indian

kingdoms grew rich on trade with Rome till AD 300, exporting luxury goods such as spices, fine silks, precious gems, and exotic creatures such as monkeys and peacocks.



Buddha head, Gupta period



The Drunken Courtesan, 2nd-century Kushana panel

4th-century Iron pillar, Delhi

AD 52
St Thomas
in India

250–300
Buddhist stupas of
Nagarjunakonda and
Amravati are built

300–399 *Ramayana*
and *Mahabharata* are
compiled

320–500 Gupta dynasty

476 Birth of
Aryabhaṭa, great
astronomer and
mathematician

606–647
Harsha's reign

630–644 Hsien
Tsang in India

AD 100

200

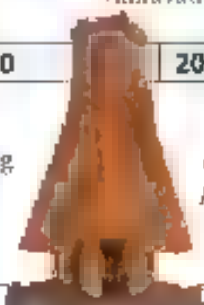
300

400

500

600

AD 78–110
Reign of
Kushana king
Kanishka



Stupa of
Kanishka

335–375 Reign of
Samudra Gupta

Gold coin of
Samudra Gupta



450 Hun
invasions begin

608–642 Reign of
Pulakeshin II
Chalukyan king



Ceremonial procession of a Rajput prince

NORTHERN KINGDOMS (AD 750–1200)

Kanauj, once the capital of Harsha's empire, centrally located in the Gangetic Plains, had by 750 become the focus of conflict between three major dynasties – the Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas and the Palas. The Pratiharas were a Rajput clan who ruled in Rajasthan and Malwa, while the Rashtrakutas (740–973) ruled in the northern Deccan. The Palas (750–1150), who were a Buddhist dynasty, ruled Bengal. Each captured Kanauj for a short while, but finally around 836, the Pratiharas gained control and held it for nearly two centuries. Soon other Rajput clans began to establish independent kingdoms.

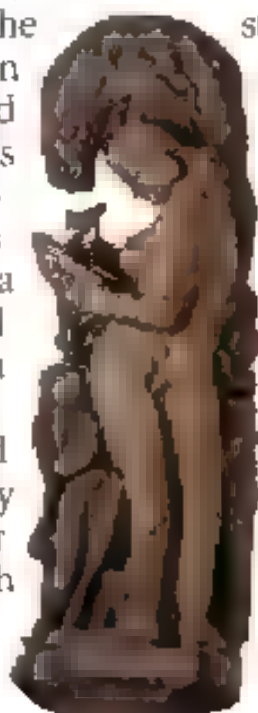
The origins of the Rajputs are shrouded in mystery, but they are known from the 7th century AD in Western India. Some of them may have been descended from Central Asian tribes who settled in India in the wake of the Hun invasions (see 43). They called themselves *raja-putra* or "sons of kings", and their 36 clans claimed descent from the sun and moon from fire or from mythical ancestors, in order to enhance their political

and social status. Early Rajput dynasties included the Paramaras in Malwa, the Solankis in Gujarat, the Tomars in Delhi, the Chandelas in Central India, and the Chauhans in Rajasthan, whose best known king, Prithviraj, is still extolled in Rajasthani ballads for his legendary valour and chivalry. During this period, independent kingdoms also existed in Kashmir, the northwest, the northeast, and in Orissa, where the Eastern Ganga dynasty, builders of the great temples at Konark and Puri (see pp310–12) ruled.

All these Rajput and non-Rajput dynasties fought frequent wars with each other to gain control of

strategic areas, setting the stage for their downfall – they would be unable to form a united front to defend themselves against outside attack. In between wars, however, the rulers and princes lived in great luxury, in grand forts and richly ornamented palaces. Agriculture was well developed, with over 100 types of cereals cultivated. Trade with the Arab lands flourished, bringing new prosperity to cities, merchants and craftsmen, and leading to the emergence of many new towns. This period also saw a flowering of literature, as well as sculpture and

temple architecture. Outstanding examples, apart from those in Orissa, are the Khajuraho temples of the Chandelas (see pp236–7), the Modhera Sun Temple (see pp418–19) and the Dilwara marble temples (see p394), which were built under the Solankis of Gujarat.



Woman writing a letter, Khajuraho

TIMELINE

Rajput shield with sun emblem

700
Arab mercenaries
arrive in
Western India

783–1036
Pratihara rule
Rajasthan and Kanauj

871–1216
Rule of Imperial
Cholas of Thanjavur

700**750****800****850****900**

736
Dhulika (Delhi)
founded by Tomars

740–973
Rule of
Rashtrakutas
of the
Deccan

750–1150
Palas rule
Bengal and
Bihar

800 Adi
Shankaracharya
preaches his
philosophy

900–1192
Rule of Western
Gangas, builders of
Shravanabelagola

916–1203
Rule of
Chandela
builders of
Khajuraho

SOUTHERN DYNASTIES (AD 600–1200)

In the Deccan and South India too several dynasties existed between 600 and 1200. A new Pallava dynasty had risen to power in the 6th century, at Kanchipuram. In 642, the Pallava ruler Narasimha Varman I defeated and killed the Chalukya king Pulakeshin II, after which the great Chalukya kingdom declined.

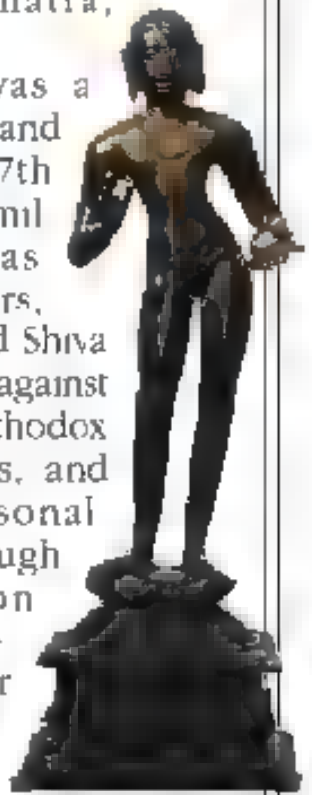
In the late 9th century, the Cholas (see pp46–7), who had gone into decline in the 4th century, reasserted their power. They defeated the Pallavas, the Western Ganga dynasty which ruled near Mysore, and the Pandyas of Madurai, and established their supremacy in the south. They would later be challenged by the Hoysalas of Karnataka (see p523) who came to power in the 12th century.

As in northern India in this period, trade flourished in the south, despite

constant wars. The Pallavas maritime trade extended as far as Cambodia, Annam, Java, Sumatra, Malaysia and China.

In religion, this was a period of questioning and ferment. From the 7th century, itinerant Tamil poet saints known as Alvaras and Navannars, devotees of Vishnu and Shiva respectively, preached against caste divisions and orthodox Brahmanical practices, and emphasized a personal union with god through love and devotion (*bhakti*). Their teachings had great popular appeal. Other influential sages were Adi Shankaracharya (see p648) who travelled across the country, elaborating on the ideas contained in the *Upanishads* (see p41) and challenging Buddhism, Jainism and the *bhakti* cult, and the 11th century philosopher Ramanuja, who expanded on Shankaracharya's teachings. By the 12th century, with the reforms and revival that had taken place in Hinduism, Buddhism went into decline, except in Eastern India.

Great monuments were built in the Deccan and South India in this period, among them the magnificent temples of the Pallavas at Mamallapuram (see pp578–81) and Kanchipuram (see p582), and the monolithic image of the Jain saint Bahubali at Shravana Belagola (see p522) erected by the Western Ganga kings. In the southwest, the superb rock-cut Kailasanatha Temple (see pp476–7) was built at Ellora by the Rashtrakutas.



Bronze image of a
Nayannar saint,
13th century



The Shore Temple of the Pallavas, Mamallapuram



Image of Surya from Konark

974–1238
Rule of Paramaras
of Malwa

998–1030
Invasions of
Muhammad of
Ghazni

1032 Adinatha
Temple, Mount Abu,
built under Solankis

1110–1342
Hoysala rule

1192 Prithviraj,
Chahman
defeated by
Muhammad of
Ghor

950

AD 1000

1050

1100

1150

1200

973–1192
Rule of
Chauhans
of Ajmer

974–1238
Rule of
Solankis of
Gujarat

1050
Ramanuja
preaches his
Vishnava
philosophy

1076–1438
Eastern Gangas of Orissa
build Konark and Puri

Prithviraj
Chahman

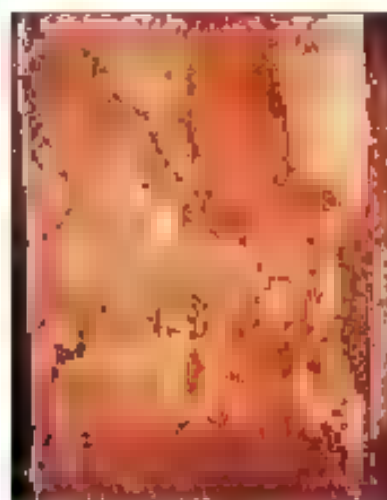


The Chola Dynasty



Chola queen

Between the 9th and 13th centuries, South India was dominated by the Chola dynasty whose extensive empire covered much of peninsular India. Their two greatest kings were Rajaraja I (985–1014) and Rajendra I (1014–1044), under whom literature, architecture and sculpture reached new heights. They built magnificent temples, endowed with land and enormous wealth, and these became the focal point of their economy as well as their social and cultural life. In 1216, the Cholas were defeated by the Pandyas, who then became the dominant power in South India.



King Rajaraja I
The first great Chola king, Rajaraja I (left) subdued other southern kingdoms and conquered Sri Lanka.



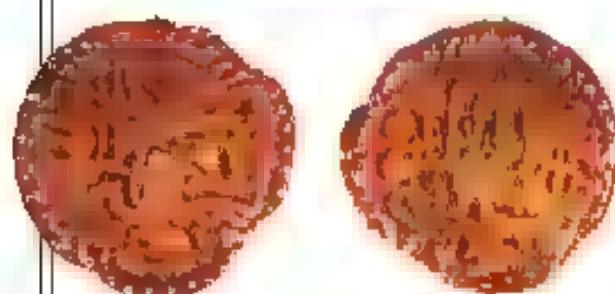
Infrastructure
The Cholas' irrigation dams on the Kaveri river (see p601) ensured the fertility of their lands. Civil and military officials, provincial chieftains and elected village committees formed part of their efficient administration.



Wrestlers
formed part of the Chola army.

CHOLA WARRIORS

This panel, from the temple at Darasuram (see p593) celebrates the martial skills of the Cholas. Rajaraja I had a huge army of 31 regiments, which included elephant and horse cavalry, as well as foot soldiers.

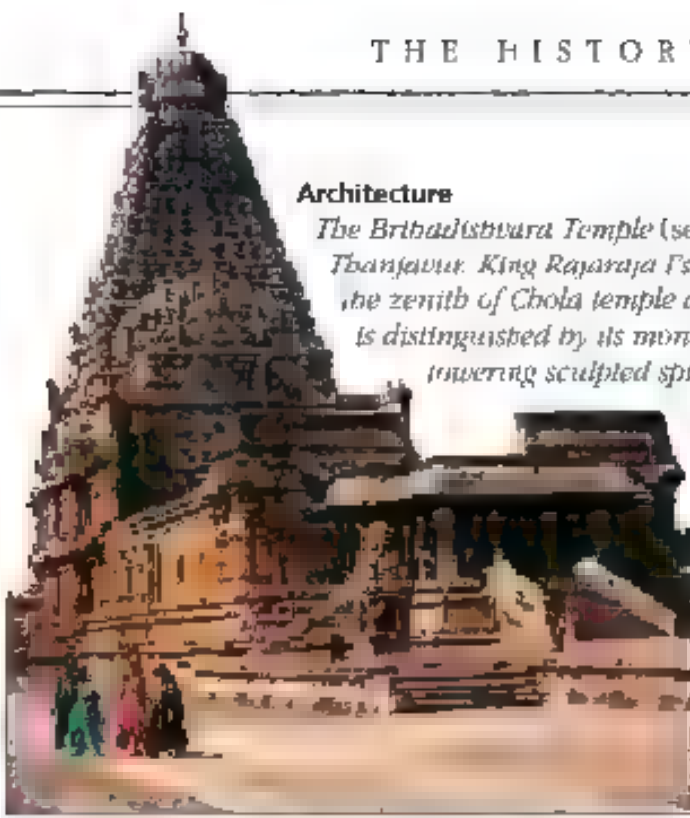


Two faces of a copper coin of Rajaraja I



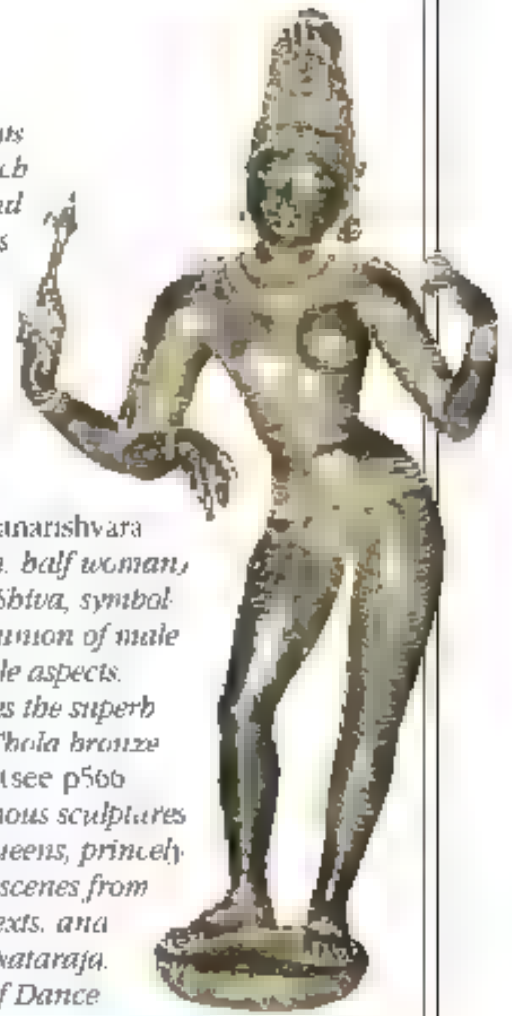
THE CHOLA EMPIRE

The Cholas established the largest empire in India since the Gupta empire in the 4th–6th centuries AD. After defeating the rulers of the Deccan, Orissa, Bihar and Bengal, they sent naval expeditions to plunder the wealth of Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Malaysia, Java and Sumatra. They also had trade and diplomatic relations with China, Cambodia and Myanmar.



Architecture

The Brihadisvara Temple (see pp598–9) at Thanjavur, King Rajaraja I's capital, represents the zenith of Chola temple architecture which is distinguished by its monumental scale and towering sculpted spires and gateways



Sculpture

This Archanarishvara (half man, half woman, image of Shiva, symbolizing the union of male and female aspects, exemplifies the superb grace of Chola bronze sculpture (see p566). Other famous sculptures portray queens, princely warriors, scenes from Shaivite texts, and Shiva as Nataraja, the God of Dance.

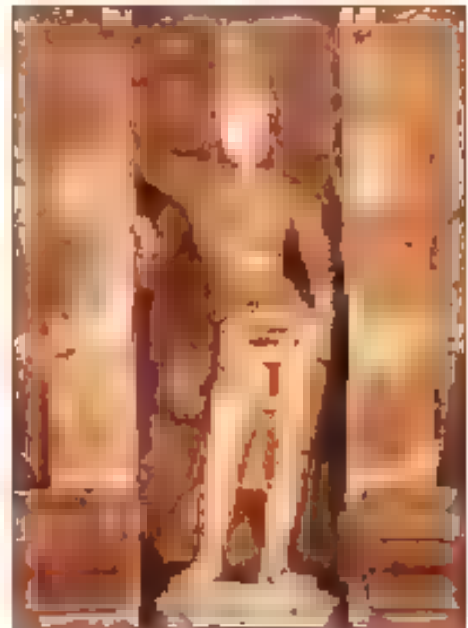


Soldiers

used swords and shields with great skill.

Religion

The Chola kings, who spent lavishly on religion, worshipped Shiva, but Vishnu worship was also popular in South India. This stone sculpture of Harihara, a composite of Shiva and Vishnu, symbolizes a bridge between the two sects.



Seat of Power

Gangaikondacholapuram (see p592) was built in 1035 by King Rajendra I as his new capital, after his successful military expedition to the Gangetic Valley, in northern India. The temple here, watched over by Shiva's bull Nandi, also served as a treasury and a cultural and educational centre.



Dance and Music

Hundreds of musicians and dancers performed at the Chola temples every evening, under royal patronage.

THE COMING OF ISLAM (1206–1555)

Constant internal warfare between the different kingdoms in the north as well as the south, had left them vulnerable to outside attack. From the 11th century, a volatile political situation in Central Asia, coupled with tales of India's fabulous wealth, fuelled a new wave of invasions by Muslim Turkic rulers from the northwest. Many of them stayed on in India to found dynasties, and with them came soldiers, scholars and merchants, artists and Sufi

preachers who brought new ideas in art, architecture, theology and warfare from the Islamic world. These were to have a lasting impact on religion, art, culture and history in the Indian subcontinent.

The first major invader was Mahmud of Ghazni who raided India repeatedly between 998–1030, and took back vast wealth from its temples. He was followed by Muhammad of Ghur, who conquered Punjab and Delhi, and established his control over areas earlier dominated by Rajputs, after defeating Prithviraj Chauhan in 1192. He was succeeded by his slave, Qutbuddin Aibak (1206–1210) who founded the first of many Muslim dynasties, collectively known as the Delhi Sultanate. Qutbuddin built

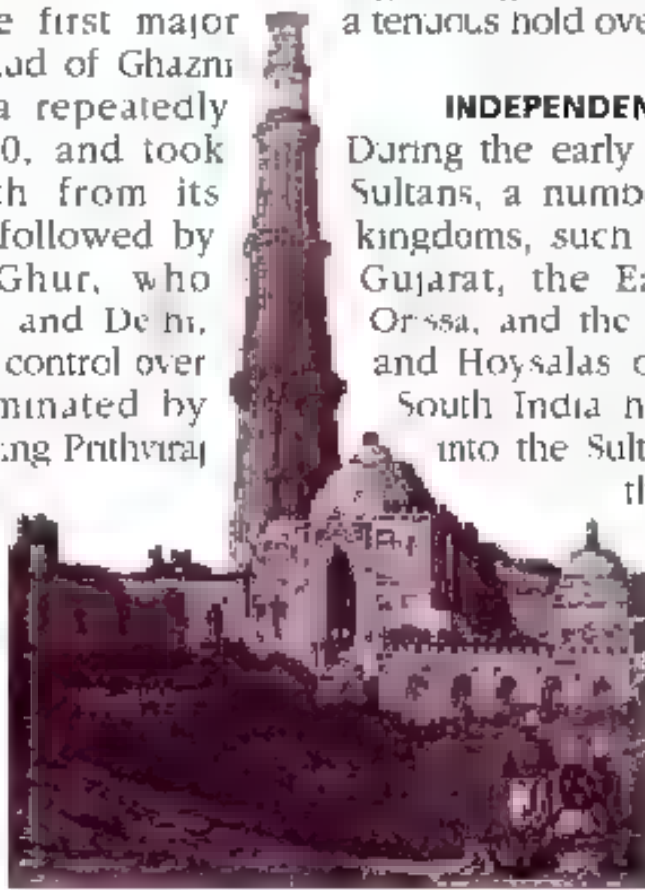
the towering Qutb Minar in Delhi. His successors included Iltutmish and Balban (see 93). Next came the Khiljis (1290–1320), whose ruler Alauddin conquered Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bengal, and made the kings of the Deccan and South India his tributaries. After the Khiljis came the Tughluqs (1320–1414) whose second ruler, Muhammad bin Tughluq, completed the conquest of the Deccan (see 475) and South India and annexed them. But he was unable to maintain control over these distant areas, which soon began to reassert their independence. This process was accelerated by the devastating invasion of northern India by Timur of Samarkand in 1398, which further weakened the power of the Delhi Sultans. The last two Sultanate dynasties, the Sayyids (1413–1451) and the Lodis (1451–1526), were riven with infighting among their nobles and had only a tenuous hold over their territories.

INDEPENDENT KINGDOMS

During the early years of the Delhi Sultans, a number of independent kingdoms, such as the Solankis in Gujarat, the Eastern Gangas in Orissa, and the Kakatyas, Pandyas and Hoysalas of the Deccan and South India had been absorbed into the Sultanate. However, as the Tughluqs began to decline, many new independent states emerged. In 1336, the Hindu Vijaya nagar Empire (see 530–31) in southern India established its independence.



Ceramic tile detail, Lodi period



The 13th-century Qutb Minar in Delhi

TIMELINE

Tughluq coin



1206–1290
Rule of first dynasty of Delhi Sultans

1288–93
venetian traveller Marco Polo visits South India

1228
Alauddin rule in Assam

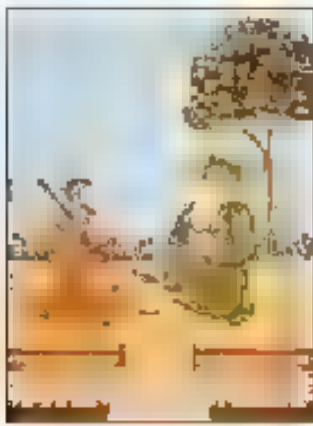
1320–1414
Rule of Tughluqs

1336–1565
Vijayanagar Empire

1347–1518
Bahmani kingdom

1250		1300		1350		1400		1450
1296–1316 Reign of Alauddin Khilji		1327 Transfer of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad		1398 Timur's invasion		1394–1505 Rule of Sharqs of Jaunpur		1440–1518 Kabir, saint-poet of the bhakti movement
1206–1210 Qutbuddin Aibak builds the Qutb Minar		Sultanate weaponry		1345–1538 Rule of Ilyas Shahs of Bengal				





The 14th-century Sufi saint Nizamuddin

while in 1347 the Muslim kingdom of the Bahmani sultans was founded in the Deccan, by a Tughluq noble. By the early 16th century, the Bahmani kingdom had broken up into the five smaller Muslim

kingdoms of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golconda, Berar and Bidar. In 1565, the combined forces of three of these kingdoms defeated the Vijayanagar forces, after which this powerful Hindu empire declined.

Meanwhile, as the Delhi Sultanate declined, its nobles and governors rebelled and founded their own kingdoms in Bengal (1388), Gujarat (1407), Mandu (1401) and Jaunpur (1408). In northeast India, the Ahoms who had migrated from Myanmar in 1228, established a kingdom in Assam (see p332). In Rajasthan too, several Rajput kingdoms, such as Mewar (see p398) and Marwar (see p380), reasserted their independence.

NEW CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Despite the turbulence throughout India between the 13th and 15th centuries, several new methods and technologies in agriculture, irrigation, administration, arts and crafts were introduced, many of them by the Muslim rulers. Trade flourished with Iran, the Arab countries, Southeast Asia, China and Europe, and a 14th-century historian records that Delhi was the largest city in the eastern Islamic world. The mosques, tombs and forts built by the Delhi Sultans

ushered in new trends in architecture, and distinct regional styles, fusing Islamic and Hindu elements, developed at places such as Ahmedabad, Mandu, and the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan.

In religion, mystical Sufi sects of Islam and saint-poets of the *bhakti* movement, such as Meerabai and Kabir, popularized the practice of religion as devotion to god, rejecting caste hierarchies. Guru Nanak (1494–1530) founded the Sikh religion (see p103), taking elements from the *bhakti* movement and Islam.

THE COMING OF THE MUGHALS

In 1526 Babur, a Central Asian prince descended from Timur, and a brilliant military campaigner, marched into India, overthrew the Lodis at the historic battle of Panipat, and laid the foundations of the Mughal Empire. Mughal rule was briefly interrupted when Babur's son Humayun was overthrown in 1540 by an Afghan chieftain, Sher Shah Suri. But Humayun regained his throne in 1555, and it was left to his son Akbar to consolidate and expand the Mughal Empire. The next two emperors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, left a legacy of magnificent art and architecture. Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal, expanded the empire by adding new territories in the south.



Frieze of an elephant hunt from Hampi, Vijayanagar



Bara Gumbad, a 15th-century Lodi tomb

1451–1526 Reign of Lodis starts in Delhi

1469–1539 Guru Nanak founds Sikhism

1555 Reconquest of Delhi by Humayun

1571–85 Akbar founds Fatehpur Sikri

1674 Shivaji crowned Chhatrapati

1643 Shah Jahan begins construction of Taj Mahal

1690 Calcutta founded by John Company

1500

1498 Portuguese Vasco da Gama reaches Calicut

1526 Babur defeats Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat

1550

1540 Sher Shah Suri defeats Humayun and takes Delhi

1530 Humayun succeeds Babur

1600

1600 Queen Elizabeth I grants charter to East India Company

1556 Akbar becomes Mughal emperor

1650

1661 Bombay transferred from Portuguese to the English

1700

The Great Mughals

The Mughals, like their contemporaries the Ottomans of Turkey, the Safavids of Iran and the Tudors of England, were a powerful and influential dynasty. They ruled India for over 300 years, their empire

extending at its height from Kandahar in the northwest to Bengal in the east, and from Kashmir in the north to the Deccan in the south. Great patrons of literature, architecture, and arts and crafts, which reached new heights under their patronage, the Mughals established a rich pluralistic culture, blending the best of Islamic and Hindu traditions.



Decorative Arts

Sumptuous objects, such as this blue glass and gold enamelled bookah base were made in the royal Mughal workshops.

Mughal helmet

Emperor Akbar

The greatest Mughal, Akbar (r 1556–1605) was a brilliant administrator and enlightened ruler. He built the city of Fatehpur Sikri (see pp180–83).



A nobleman presents a gift to the emperor

Weaponry

War elephants formed an important part of the Mughal army. They were controlled and commanded with sharp but beautifully crafted goads.



Mughal Coins

Gold mohurs struck during the reigns of Akbar and his son Jahangir are renowned for their fine calligraphy.



Court robes and turbans indicated status and religion

Rajput princes were loyal allies

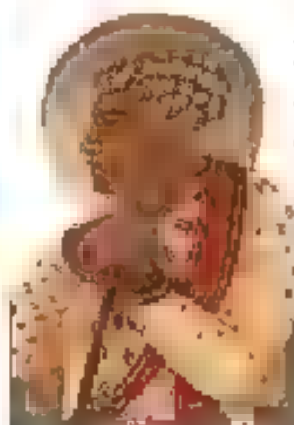
Diwan-i-Khas was the special audience hall

Political Alliances

Raja Man Singh I of Amber gave his daughter in marriage to Akbar, beginning a tradition of Mughal-Rajput alliances that would bring peace and prosperity to the Mughal Empire.

The Nine Jewels

Akbar gathered at his court brilliant men from different professions whom he called his "nine jewels." They included the musician Tansen (centre) who, it is said, could light a lamp with the power of his voice.



Nur Jahan

A formidable combination of brains and beauty, Jahangir's Persian-born queen (b. 1577) was the real power behind the throne

**Architecture**

A monument of ethereal beauty, built by Shah Jahan for his wife, the Taj Mahal (see pp172–5) represents the zenith of Mughal architecture

Jewellery

The legendary wealth of the Mughals included fabulous jewellery, such as this pendant encrusted with large, flawless diamonds

**Illuminated Manuscripts**

Works of literature, history and biography were produced on gilded paper with beautiful calligraphy and illustrations



Shah Jahan on his splendid throne.

**SHAH JAHAN'S COURT**

The splendour of the Mughal court is illustrated in this 17th-century painting of Emperor Shah Jahan, with his nobles grouped in strict hierarchical order around the throne. Mughal emperors, whose capitals were at Agra and later Delhi, used glittering court rituals and pageantry to display their supreme authority, as they took stock of the state of affairs in their empire.

Wars of Succession

Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal, came to power after imprisoning his father Shah Jahan and killing his brothers. Ruthless and bigoted, he alienated many of his Hindu subjects, but expanded the Mughal Empire.

**THE MUGHAL DYNASTY**

The Mughal Empire flourished from 1526 until Aurangzeb's death in 1707. After that, the dynasty gradually declined under weak rulers, and finally ended in 1857. Its first six rulers were:

Babur (r 1526–30)

Humayun (r 1530–56)

Akbar (r 1556–1605)

Jahangir (r 1605–27)

Shah Jahan (r 1627–58)

Aurangzeb (r 1658–1707)

THE DECLINE OF THE MUGHALS

The death of Emperor Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal, in 1707, heralded the decline of the Mughal Empire. He left a ruined economy and weak successors, and independent states now began to be established by the Rajputs in Rajasthan, the nawabs of Avadh and Bengal, the nizams of Hyderabad, and the Wodeyars of Mysore. Two new powers were the Marathas in the Deccan and the Sikhs in the north. The Marathas under their leader Shivaji (see p471) expanded their territories after 1647. The Sikhs, originally a religious group, began to acquire territory in the hill states of the north, Jammu and Punjab. Under Ranjit Singh (see p104), they became a powerful state in the early 19th century.



Sahib and mahout on elephant

out to the English. The 18th century saw major conflicts between the French and English, with three Carnatic Wars fought between 1740 and 1763, in South India and involving Indian powers on both sides. Ultimately, the English were the victors, the French retaining only Pondicherry and a few small settlements.

THE RISE OF THE BRITISH

Meanwhile, the English East India Company was acquiring territory in the north by gaining trade concessions from the Mughal emperors from the early 17th century onwards. They defeated the nawabs of Bengal in the Battles of Plassey (Palasi) in 1757 and Buxar in 1764. By this time, the invasions of Nadir Shah of Persia in 1739, and Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan in 1761, had further weakened the Mughals. In the battle with Abdali the Marathas, who had gained control of Delhi, suffered a crushing defeat. From these beginnings, the British began to expand their power. Robert Clive (see p561), responsible for many of their successes, became Governor of Bengal in 1757. From 1773, the Parliament in England started to

THE EUROPEANS

But India would no longer remain a battleground for indigenous groups and dynasties – European traders, who had begun to arrive in the 16th century, were to change the course of its history. To set up trading factories in areas where their agents had settled, the Europeans began to acquire land, and fought numerous wars, both against one another and against Indian rulers. The trading groups were organized into companies, and included the Portuguese, French, Dutch and English. The Portuguese, who were the first to arrive, lost most of their territories to the Dutch and English by the end of the 17th century, retaining only Goa and a few adjacent enclaves. The Dutch, in turn, lost



Rachol Church in Portuguese Goa

TIMELINE

1707 Death of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb

1739 Nadir Shah of Persia invades Delhi

1761 Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan defeats Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat

1774–85 Warren Hastings, first Governor General

A Maratha soldier

1750

1775

1727 The city of Jaipur founded by Sawai Jai Singh II

Nadir Shah's battle axe

1764 Battle of Buxar: British granted Diwani of Bengal

1789 Marathas occupy Delhi

1757 Battle of Plassey: British defeat Siraj-ud-daulah, Nawab of Bengal

1799 Tipu Sultan defeated



Sepoys (Indian foot soldiers of the East India Company) rebelling at Fatehpur during the Mutiny of 1857

exercise some control over the Company. Warren Hastings, appointed Governor in 1772, was soon given the title of Governor General of Bengal (1774–1785) with supervisory powers over all the Company's territories. Under him and his successors (who from 1833 onwards were known as governors general of India) expansion continued with major wars being fought against the Marathas, the Punjab and Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan in Mysore. Other states too were conquered or brought under British control by various policies, such as the Subsidiary Alliance, under which Indian states had to maintain British troops and allow a British official to reside in the state and advise them. Another policy was the Doctrine of Lapse, under which states "lapsed" to the Company

if a ruler died without a direct male heir. Thus by 1857, the Company's control extended over much of India, and obtained them vast profits. After the

Industrial Revolution raw materials from India were exported to Britain and machine-made British goods, particularly textiles, flooded the country. Artisans were impoverished, and crafts, towns and cities declined. Discontent with the alien rulers was growing. Unlike earlier conquerors of India, the British maintained their separateness, and their base in another country. In 1857, a combination of factors led to a major revolt, which began as a soldiers' mutiny but soon had widespread civilian participation. Thousands of rebels marched towards Delhi in May and proclaimed the titular Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah Zafar, emperor of India. By September the British had regained control over Delhi. Bahadur Shah was exiled to

Rangoon (Yangon), and his young sons executed.

Other rebel areas were also brutally taken over, ending the first major challenge to British rule.



Toy showing Tipu's tiger mauling a British soldier

1803
British capture Delhi from the Marathas



Queen Victoria's head on a Company coin

1853 First railway from Bombay to Thana

1857 The Indian Mutiny

1863 Simla becomes summer capital of the Raj

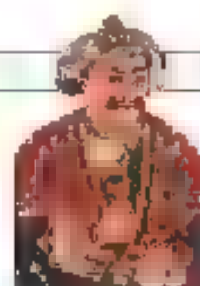
1800

1799–1839
Reign of Ranjit Singh

1818
Rajasthani kingdoms accept British control

1825

1829 Governor General Bentinck bans *sati*, the Hindu practice of widow burning



1850

1856
Annexation of Awadh

Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh

1858 Crown takes over the East India Company. Lord Canning becomes the first Viceroy

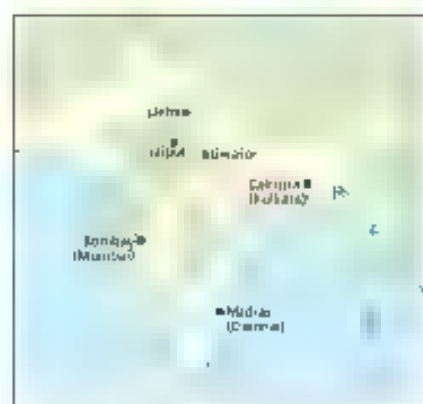
Pax Britannica



The Victoria Cross

The foundations of British rule – or the Raj, were laid after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, which revealed the unpopularity of the East India Company's rule. By an Act of Parliament in 1858, the Company's rule ended, and its Indian territories became part of the British Empire, to be ruled through a viceroy. Though the *raison d'être* of the Raj was economic profit and political control,

its abiding legacy was the political unification of the subcontinent, together with the introduction of Western education, a centralized administrative system, and a network of railways.



BRITISH INDIA

□ British territory, 1858

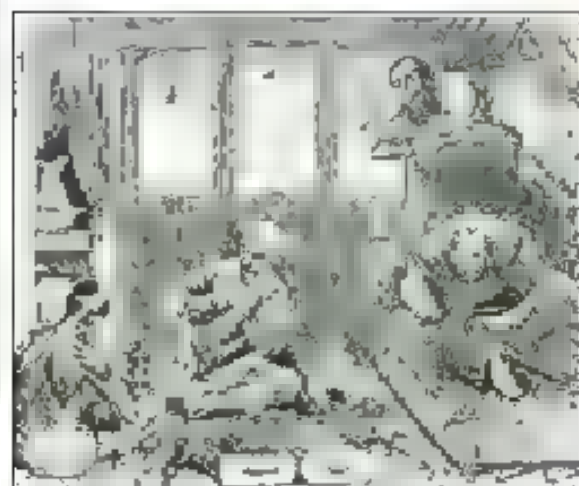
Caparisoned elephants carry Raj officials.

Indian attendants in viceregal ivory re-enact a Mughal procession.



Administration

Some 2,000 British officers, members of the prestigious Indian Civil Service, ruled over 300 million Indians. Dubbed the "Steel Frame of India", they brought British-style law and order to the remotest corners of the country.



A Sahib Travelling

A vast rail network was set up to facilitate commerce and travel. This 19th-century print shows first class travel, a privilege of "whites only". The sahibs travelled in style, with several servants in attendance.



Lord Curzon

Viceroy from 1899 to 1905, Curzon believed British rule was necessary to civilize "backward" India. Paradoxically, the Western-style educational institutions set up by the Raj helped make Indians more aware of the injustices of colonial rule.





Raj Cuisine

The British soon developed a taste for Indian curries, toned down to make them a bit less spicy. Restaurants such as London's Chutney Mary have been popular in Britain ever since.

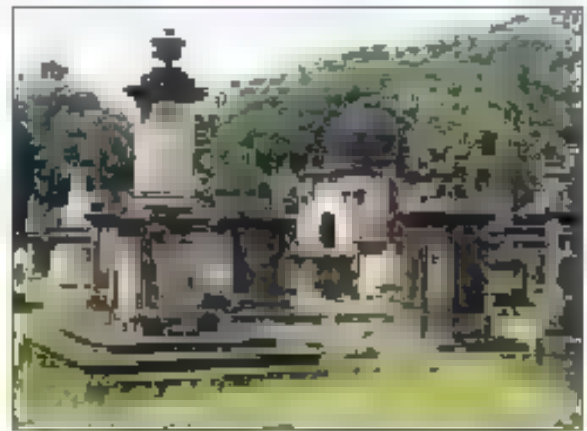
Memsahib and Tailor

Despite the climate, the British clung to their own dress and lifestyle. Children were sent "home" to study, and a large Indian staff enabled a leisurely lifestyle.



The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, and his wife lead the procession

Crowds line the streets to see the grand spectacle



Cemeteries of the Raj

The harsh Indian climate took a heavy toll on British women and children. Their tombs fill the Raj's graveyards.

THE IMPERIAL DURBAR, 1903

This painting of Curzon's Delhi Darbar (1903), held to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII in London, shows a procession winding through the historic streets of Delhi. Held periodically, such assemblies announced the grandeur and the political might of British Rule in India.



Colonial Architecture

The most imposing edifice in New Delhi, built as the imperial capital between 1911 and 1931, was the viceroy's sprawling residence.

The Company School

Paintings by Indian artists, such as this fanciful portrait of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in Indian royal attire, were specially commissioned for the British market.





Crowds of supporters around Mahatma Gandhi

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

After 1857, nationalist aspirations began to grow, and the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 gave Indians a platform from which to demand self-government. A turning point came in 1919, when General Reginald Dyer's troops fired on an unarmed crowd in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, which was protesting against the suppression of civil liberties. More than 300 people died, and Indians of every caste, class and religion united in their outrage at British brutality. By 1920, the leadership of the National Movement was taken over by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a Gujarati lawyer who had recently returned from South Africa. Popularly known as Mahatma or "great soul", Gandhi's charismatic appeal and identification with the poor of India converted the freedom struggle into a mass movement. His strategy was to launch a moral crusade of non-violent resistance (*satyagraha*) to British laws and institutions, followed by

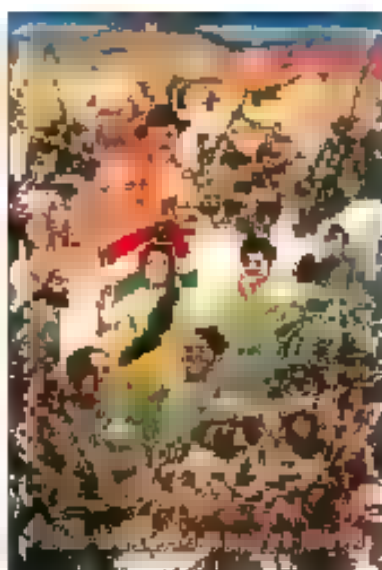
periods of constructive village work. Working alongside Gandhi were several outstanding Indians, among whom was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

At first, the movement for freedom was ruthlessly suppressed, but after World War II, Britain no longer had the strength or the will to enforce its rule. Meanwhile, from 1940 onwards, the Muslim League, led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, had been demanding an independent state of Pakistan for Muslims.

Finally, at midnight on 14/15 August, 1947, the era of British rule ended, and the new nations of India and Pakistan were born. Casting a dark shadow over the celebrations was the Partition of the Indian subcontinent into two countries, accompanied by mass migrations of millions of Hindus and Muslims across the borders, and communal riots in which thousands were killed.

INDEPENDENT INDIA

After Independence, the new government integrated more than 550 princely states, which had been semi-independent in British days, into the Indian Union. In late 1947, a war between India and Pakistan took place over the accession to India of the princely state of Kashmir, and this continues to be a major point of dispute between the two countries. In 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic who felt he favoured Muslims. This so shocked and grieved both communities that peace was finally restored. As India's first prime



A popular poster of political heroes, past and present

TIMELINE

1885
Indian National Congress founded

1911 Transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi announced at the Delhi Durbar

1920 Non-cooperation Movement launched by Gandhi

1940 Muslim League adopts the Pakistan Resolution

1942 Quit India Movement

1948 Mahatma Gandhi assassinated



1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1905
Partition of Bengal



Gandhi's spinning wheel

1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre

1913 Rabindranath Tagore wins Nobel Prize

1947 India attains Independence. Partition

1930-32 Civil Disobedience Movement

The Indian flag

1952 First General Election with universal suffrage



Nehru, with his daughter Indira and grandson Rajiv

then withdrew after inflicting a humiliating defeat on the Indian army. This brought about much needed modernization of India's military machine. Nehru died in May 1964, and in 1966 his daughter Indira Gandhi became prime minister. She continued his pro-poor and socialist policies, and in 1971, she stripped the Indian princes of their titles and abolished their privy purses. Later in the same year, she aided East Pakistan in its struggle against West Pakistan, leading to the formation of Bangladesh. But in 1975, perceiving a threat to her power and popularity, she declared a State of Emergency,



Rural women learning to read during a literacy campaign

minister, Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundations of a modern nation state, with a democratic, secular polity, a strong industrial base and a planned economy, with Non alignment as the keystone of its foreign policy. In 1962, China invaded north east India and

under which the press was censored and dissidents imprisoned. When the general elections took place, in 1977, she was defeated, and the Congress party lost power for

the first time since Independence. By 1980, Indira and the Congress were back in power, but a military action against Sikh terrorists holed up in their sacred Golden Temple led to her assassination by her Sikh guards in 1984. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, took over in a sympathy wave, and began liberalizing the economy. He was assassinated by a Sri Lankan Tamil separatist during the 1991 election campaign, but economic reforms encouraging private enterprise and foreign investment continued. Since 1996, a series of coalition governments have been in power, with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerging as a major force to challenge the Congress.

Significant progress has been made in the 60 years since Independence, though unemployment and poverty

continue to exist. The literacy rate has risen from 18 per cent in 1951 to 66 per cent in 2001. In urban areas, women can be seen working in all professions. From frequent food shortages in the 1950s, India now has a food surplus, and its industrial base has expanded to produce a wide range of goods, from toys to aircraft. Economic reforms have flooded the market with consumer goods, and helped the rise of a prosperous middle class. In the field of information technology, there has been a veritable revolution, with India now established as a world leader in software development.



A newly-built Info-tech park in Hyderabad

1961 Goa liberated from Portuguese rule

1962 India-China war

1971 Birth of Bangladesh

1992 Destruction of Babri Masjid leads to communal riots

1991 Rajiv Gandhi assassinated

1998 BJP comes to power AB Vajpayee becomes Prime Minister

2001 Capital Earthquake

2004 Tsunami hits Orissa, Tamil Nadu and the Andamans

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

1965 War with Pakistan

1975 Indira Gandhi declares Emergency

1998 Atanuva Sen wins the Nobel Prize for Economics

2000 Population reaches 1 billion

2007 Pratibha Patil becomes the first woman President of India

1971 Princes lose titles and privy purses

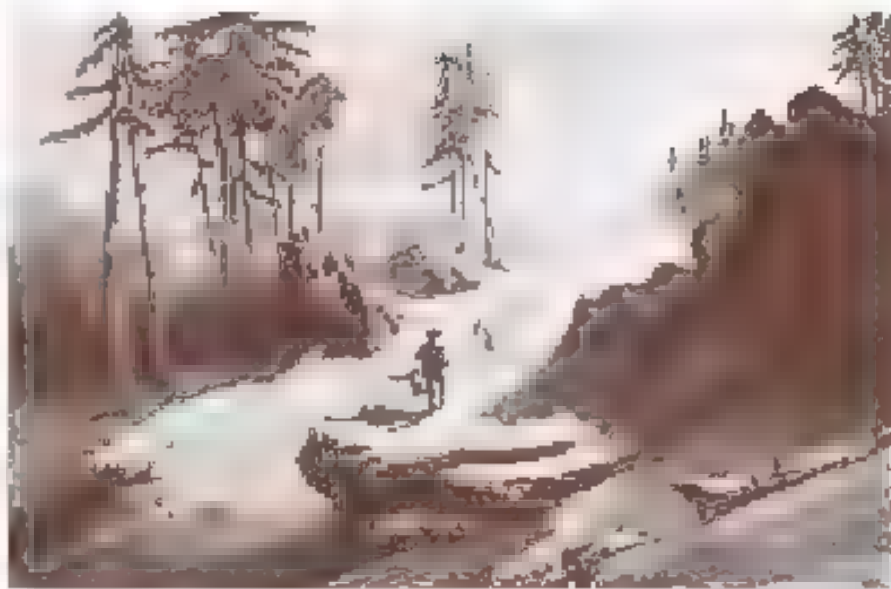
1982 India sends scientific team to Antarctica

1999 India-Pakistan conflict in Kargil





DELHI & THE NORTH



INTRODUCING DELHI & THE NORTH 60-67

DELHI 68 97

HARYANA & PUNJAB 98 107

HIMACHAL PRADESH 108 133

LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR 134 155

Introducing Delhi & the North

As rich in natural beauty as in historic sites, North India is a much visited region. A wide variety of landscapes can be enjoyed here, from the snowcapped peaks, alpine valleys and pine forests of Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh, to the flat plains of Haryana and Punjab dappled with fields of golden mustard and wheat. In sharp contrast is the urban sprawl of Delhi, a bustling metropolis and the nation's capital. Ladakh's dramatically sited cliff top monasteries and pristine trekking trails are major attractions for visitors, as are Shimla's Raj-era ambience and Dharamsala's distinctive Tibetan flavour. Amritsar's great Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple, and Delhi's magnificent Mughal monuments are other popular destinations.



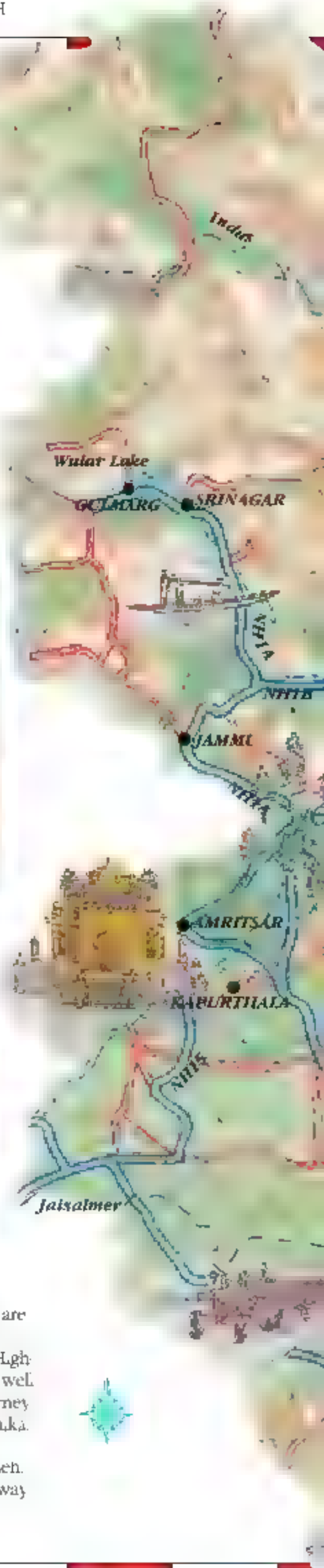
The lush green landscape of Srinagar, in the Kashmir Valley

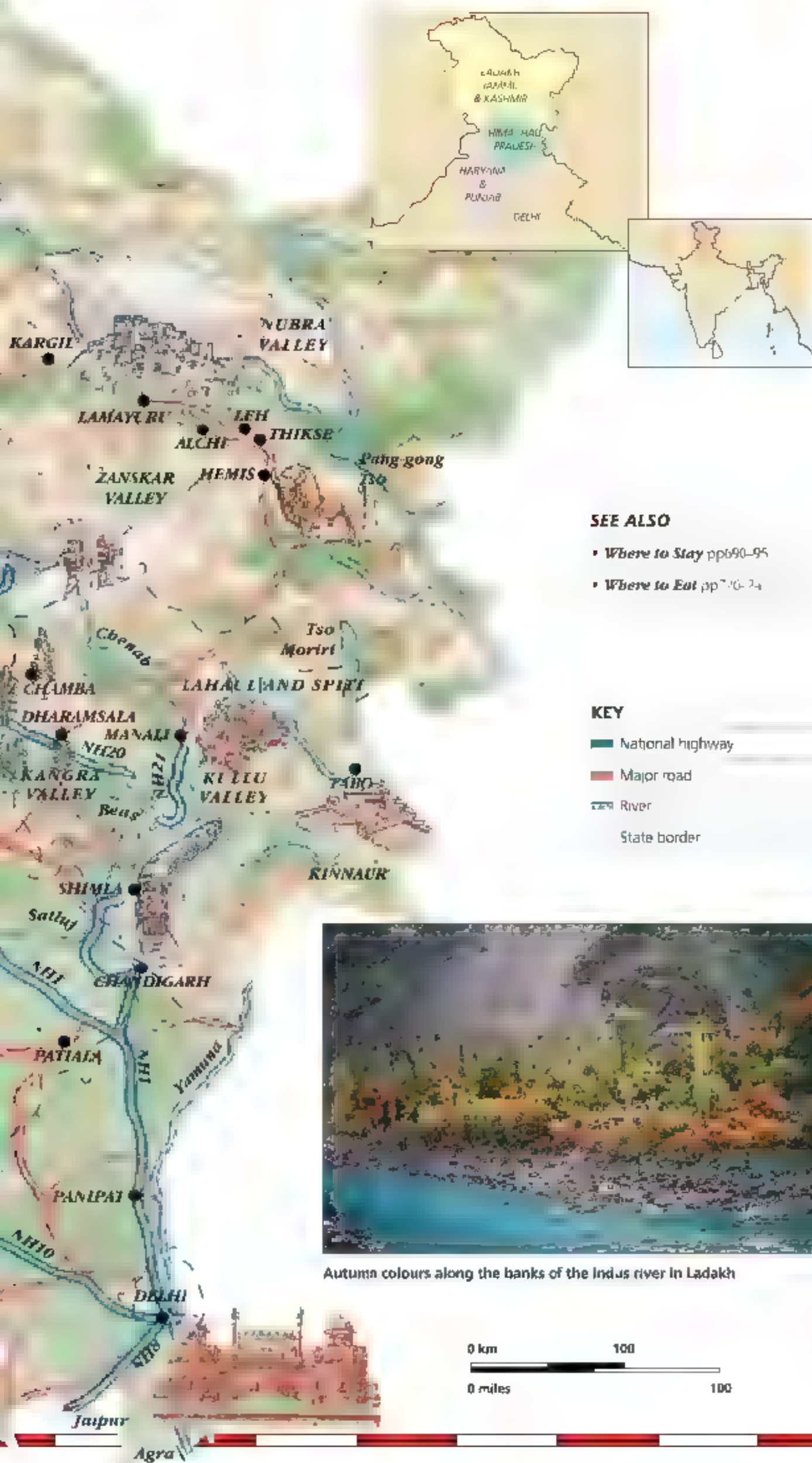


Punjabi farmers enjoying a ride in a tractor-trailer

GETTING AROUND

Delhi has good air, rail and road links to the rest of the region. There are daily flights to Leh, Srinagar, Amritsar and Chandigarh. Amritsar and Chandigarh are also connected to Delhi by fast trains and a National Highway. From Chandigarh, there are air services to Shimla and Manali, as well as road links with frequent bus services. A particularly charming journey is on the Toy Train, "Shivalik Queen" (see p 777) which goes from Kalka, near Chandigarh, to Shimla. Other great journeys, with spectacular mountain scenery en route, include the trip by road from Manali to Leh, and the journey along the old Hindustan-Tibet Road (National Highway 22), which runs from Shimla to the India-China border near Shipkila.





A PORTRAIT OF DELHI & THE NORTH

The peaks of the Himalayas, the most spectacular natural barrier in the world, mark the boundaries of the area that extends northwards from Delhi. A variety of cultures and landscapes lies within this region. Delhi's bustling urban sprawl gradually gives way to the lush flat farmlands of Punjab and Haryana, north of which are the serene mountainous lands of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh.

In geological terms, the Himalayas are very young (see pp64-5), but for humans, they evoke a feeling of timeless eternity, and have been a source of spiritual inspiration for Indians for thousands of years. The monasteries and temples situated on their slopes perfectly complement the profound beauty of these mountains.

Most visitors to the region start out from Delhi, the country's capital, a city that is a blend of several historical eras. Its grand Mughal past is evident in its many superb monuments and tombs. The elegant tree-lined avenues and bungalows of New Delhi evoke the period of the British rule. Yet both coexist alongside the modern world of



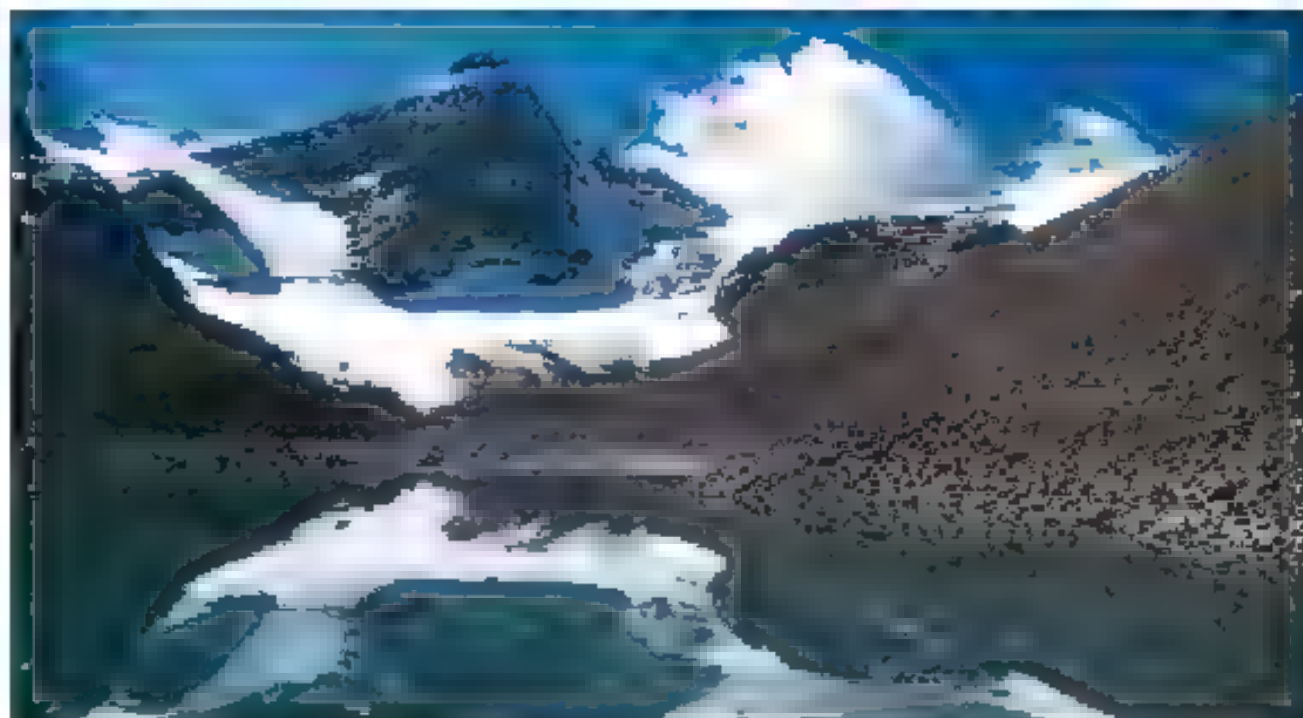
Saffron flowers

internet cafés, shopping arcades and posh multiplex cinemas.

Delhi's population swelled massively to accommodate the millions of people displaced by the Partition of India in 1947, when the western portion of Punjab became part of

Pakistan. Homeless refugees from west Punjab have since prospered in Delhi, and now dominate the city's commercial life. As the nation's capital, Delhi continues to attract people from all over India, giving this vibrant city a resolutely cosmopolitan air.

The hardworking, resilient Punjabis have also transformed their home state with modern farming techniques, introduced in the 1960s. As a result of this "Green Revolution", Punjab and



A deep blue glacial lake near Thamsar Pass in Himachal Pradesh



Mustard fields in the fertile plains of Punjab

Haryana today produce much of India's wheat and rice, and one-third of its dairy products. Punjabis are also among the most successful immigrant communities in the world, and today, almost every family has at least one member living abroad,

whether in London, New York, Vancouver or Hong Kong, as portrayed in Mira Nair's film, *Monsoon Wedding* (2001).

The name "Punjab" refers to the five (*panch*) rivers (*ab*) which traverse this green land. The sixth "river", if one can call it that, is the legendary Grand Trunk Road (*see p179*). Travelling almost anywhere north of Delhi, one is bound to use this route. The kind of traffic may have changed since Rudyard Kipling's (*see p255*) day, and it is now rather prosaically rechristened National Highway 1, but it still lives up to the author's description. "Such a river of life exists nowhere in the world"

During the Raj-era, the British would escape from the summer heat of the plains and head for the hills. Today's visitors follow

in their footsteps all year round. Himachal Pradesh has a number of delightful hill stations, such as Shimla, Kasauli and Dalhousie. The hillsides are covered with orchards, and apple farming is an important part of the state's economy. Himachal Pradesh also offers spectacular treks, some of

which start from Dharamsala, a town with a distinct Tibetan flavour as the home of the Dalai Lama (*see p122*). Jammu and Kashmir, which includes Ladakh, is India's northernmost state. Tragically, the militant separatist movement in the beautiful Kashmir Valley has effectively put an end to

tourism there. But

Ladakh remains an oasis of peace.

Often perceived as having a purely Buddhist culture, its population is, in fact, almost equally divided between Buddhists

and Muslims, who coexist here in harmony. Ladakh's uniquely syncretic culture, together with its astonishing natural beauty and the dramatic architecture of its monasteries, make it one of India's most fascinating areas.



A Delhi wedding procession



A Kashmiri family gathered around their samovar

The Great Himalayas



Himalayan monal pheasant

The highest and youngest mountains in the world, the Himalayan Range stretches for 2,500 km (1,553 miles) along the Indian subcontinent's northern borders, separating it from Central Asia and the Tibetan Plateau.

The Himalayas were formed about 30 million years ago, when the Indian plate broke away from Gondwanaland, drifted northwards and collided with the Eurasian landmass, driving the earth's crust up to form three parallel ranges, which include 30 of the world's highest peaks.



LOCATOR MAP

□ The Himalayas

■ Area illustrated below



High altitude desert, where little grows except lichen, is found above the tree line. One such area is between Diskit and Hunder in Ladakh's Nubra Valley (see p143) which has sand dunes and camels.



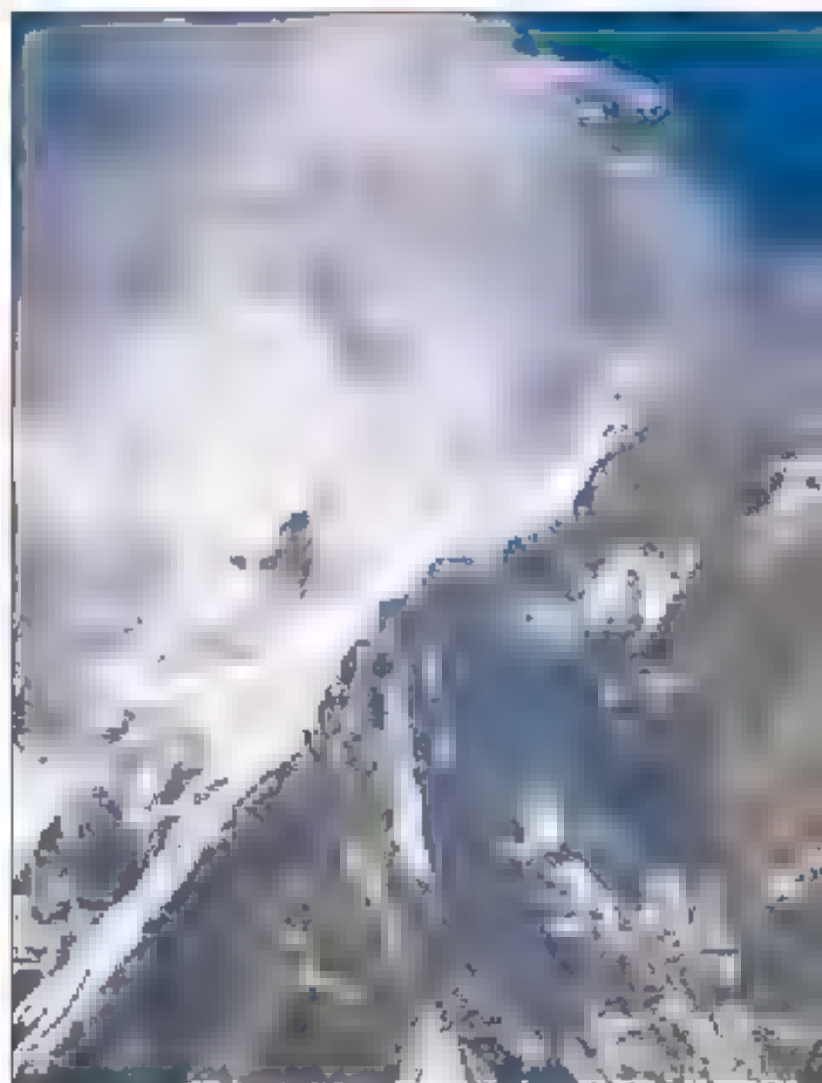
Glaciers are especially abundant in the Western Himalayas. They are the source of three great Indian rivers – the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra.

Bandar Punch ("Monkey Tail") 6,316 m (20,722 ft) attracts many mountaineers. This peak is visible from Doodhata. (see p188)

Jaonali Peak, 5,633 m (21,762 ft)

Pithwar Peak, 6,904 m (22,651 ft)

Kadarnath, 6,940 m (22,769 ft) is regarded as Shiva's sacred mountain. Below it is the famous Kedarnath Temple.



THE HIMALAYAS

Fourteen peaks in the Himalayas tower above 8,000 m (26,247 ft), including Mount Everest, the world's highest peak at 8,848 m (29,329 ft). The two highest peaks in India are Kanchendzonga (see p302) at 8,598 m (28,209 ft) and Nanda Devi (seen above) at 7,817 m (25,646 ft).





A traditional Himalayan dwelling is generally built of stone and wood, or sun-dried mud bricks. Typically, it has two or three storeys, the lowest level filled with stone to provide stability during earthquakes, the next level housing livestock and the top floor where the family rooms are laid out.



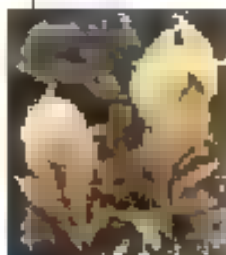
Marine fossils and rocks that have been found in high altitudes in the Himalayas, and even on peaks such as Mount Everest, testify that these mountains were once a part of the Tethys seabed.

Trishul ("Trident"),
7,120 m (23,360 ft)

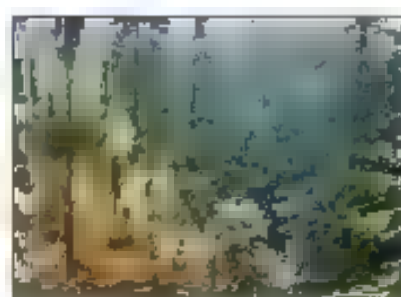
Nanda Devi,
7,817 m (25,646 ft)

FLORA AND FAUNA

Subtropical jungles, temperate coniferous forests and alpine meadows are among the varied vegetation zones in the Himalayas. They support a rich and abundant variety of plant and animal life.



Brahma Karmal (*Saussurea obvallata*) is a popular offering at most hill temples.



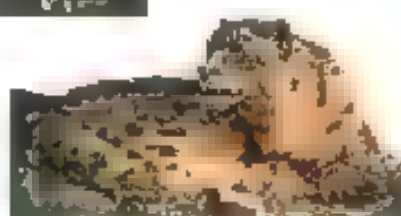
Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*) is a towering conifer found in temperate forests in the Western Himalayas.



Bar-headed geese (*Anser indicus*) are attractive water birds that breed in high altitude lakes in Ladakh.



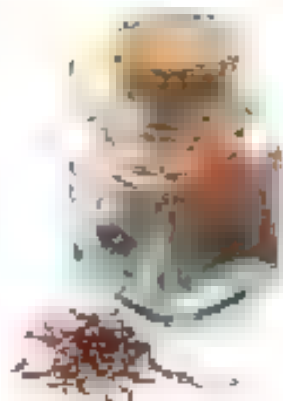
Bharal (*Pseudois nayaur*) are called blue sheep because of the blue sheen on their grey coats. They inhabit the harsh, stony slopes above the snow line.



The snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*), now endangered, lives above 4,000 m (13,123 ft). It preys on wild sheep and bares.

The Flavours of Delhi & the North

Several culinary strands cross the region of Delhi and the Punjab, which, despite national boundaries, begins at the Khyber Pass, now in Pakistan. Wheat is the staple food and a variety of breads (*rotis*) are baked in a *tandoor*, the domed clay oven, also used to barbecue marinated meats and vegetables. Rich curries, legacies of the imperial kitchen, are still prepared as is the post-Partition cuisine of butter chicken, *tikkas* and *dal makhani*. Kashmiri flavours are a delicate blend of yoghurt, spices, aniseed, dried ginger powder, red chillies and a pinch of asafoetida (Hindus) or garlic (Muslims). Rice and mutton are the standard fare of both communities.



Strands of saffron



Mangoes and other fruit on sale in a Delhi fresh produce market

Today, Delhi is a city of immigrants and each community has brought its own food. By far the most dominant is Punjabi and "Frontier" cuisine. The ubiquitous *tandoori* chicken, served with pickled onions and mint chutney was "invented" in Daryaganj's Moti Mahal restaurant in 1947. Other popular foods are the *dosa* and *idli* from South India (see pp554-5).

Delhi has an abundance of street foods. *Bhutta* (corn-on-the-cob) roasting on makeshift stoves, fruit juices and cooling sherbets sold from handcarts and the range of *chaat* (savoury snacks) are legendary. Equally famous are *jalebis* (crisply fried batter in syrup), *phirni* (rice pudding) and crushed almond or pistachio *kulfi* (ice cream), garnished with noodle ribbons.

DELHI

Centuries of Muslim rule have given Delhi its succulent *shami* and *burra kebabs* as well as creamy *kormas* and *salans*, rich *biryanis* and *pulaos*, all delicately spiced main dishes. Once served at the courts of kings, emperors and sultans, this imperial cuisine is still eaten by most people.



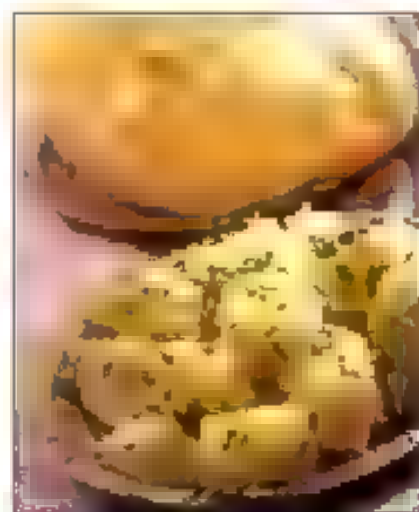
A tandoori platter with a selection of barbecued meats

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

From the old city of Delhi comes the *nahari*, the delectable mutton (which can mean goat meat too in India) dish that is cooked through the night and served at breakfast with *naans*. Snacks include the popular *chhole-bhatura* and vegetable *pakora* (Indian tempura). Specialities of the Punjab include *dal makhani*, *baigan ka bharta* (smoked and pureed aubergines (eggplant))

Mint and chillies

and various stuffed breads. Vegetarian dishes in Kashmir are few, the most famous being *baag* (a special spinach), *aloo dum* (potatoes in yoghurt), and *chaman* (cottage cheese in gravy). Lamb or mutton dishes include *rishia* (meatballs) cooked in a sauce and *tabak maz* (fried ribs cooked in milk).



Aloo puri is a spicy potato dish eaten with puffy deep-fried bread and a mint and coriander chutney.



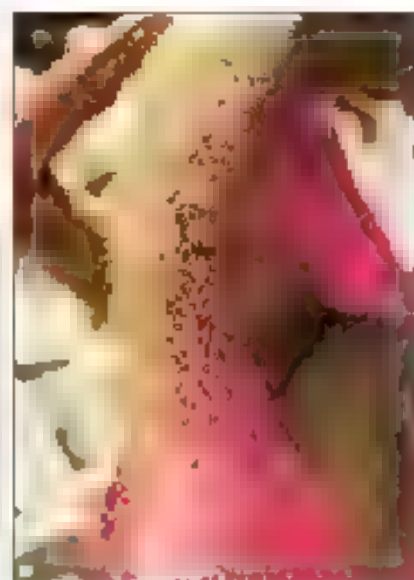
Shikras (skiffs) carrying fresh vegetables, Dal Lake, Srinagar, Kashmir

PUNJAB

Punjabi food is robust and linked to the lifestyle of the largely farming communities. It is dominated by milk and its products, such as yoghurt and *paneer* (cottage cheese), prepared in innumerable ways. Popular drinks are *lassi* (buttermilk) and a variant, *chhach* made with ginger, coriander and powdered cumin. Wheat is the staple cereal and dishes include *aloo parathas* (fried bread stuffed with potatoes and other vegetables and eaten with yoghurt) and the seasonal *sarson ka saag* (mustard greens) and *makke (corn) ki roti*.

Although vegetarian food is the main fare, the non-vegetarian dishes from this state are a mixture of Northwest Frontier and

Mughlai cuisines. The hub of Punjabi cuisine is Amritsar famous for its batter-fried fish. The *dhabas* (eateries that dot the main highways offer the best local food as lorry drivers demand a fresh, hot and tasty meal.



Winnowing wheat, a common sight in the Punjab

KASHMIR

Food here ranges from a simple family meal to a 36-course wedding banquet, the *wazawan*, where guests are seated on cushioned rugs in groups of four, in front of large silver platters. Rice, grown in the Kashmir Valley, mutton, chicken or fish are of prime importance. The generous use of yoghurt in the sauces gives the dishes a creamy consistency, while the locally-grown saffron adds flavour and colour. Walnuts and almonds are also added for texture and flavour. A meal ends with *kahwa*, a green tea flavoured with cardamom and cinnamon.

ON THE MENU

Aloo tikki Potato cutlets.

Chhole-bhatura Spiced chickpeas and puffy bread.

Dal makhani Lentils flavoured with ginger, garlic, spices and a dollop of cream.

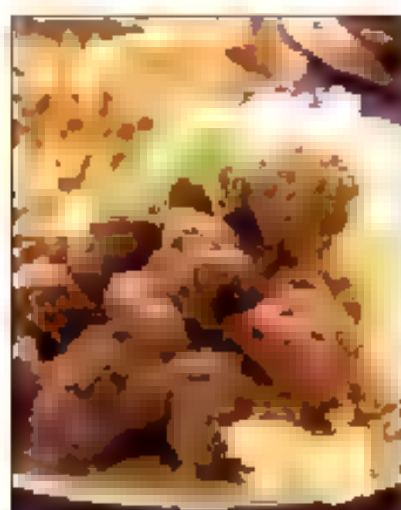
Gushtaba Large meat balls flavoured with fresh mint.

Phirni A sweet rice pudding garnished with nuts.

Shami kebab Minced meat patties flavoured with spices.

Tandoori murg Barbequed spring chicken.

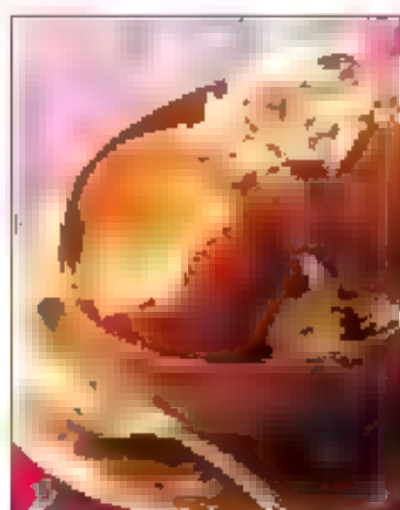
Yakhni A yoghurt and mutton or lotus root curry with a delicate hint of fennel.



Rogan josh has pieces of mutton simmered in yoghurt which is then thickened with *khoya* (solidified milk).



Dal combines lentils with a heady mix of onions, garlic and spices. It is considered India's "soul food".



Gulab jamuns are deep-fried milk and flour balls in a sweet syrup flavoured with rosewater and cardamom.



DELHI

Delhi, the capital of India, is also its third largest city, with a population of about 16 million. Its strategic location along the north-south, east-west route has given it a focal position in Indian history, and many great empires have been ruled from here. The monuments and ruins of these are scattered throughout the city, often cheek by jowl with modern structures and highrise towers.

The vast urban sprawl of contemporary Delhi is, in fact, a conglomeration of several distinct enclaves, chief among which are Old Delhi, with its 16th- and 17th-century Mughal-built monuments and congested souk-like bazaars, and New Delhi with its wide avenues, grand vistas and colonial mansions built by the British in the 1930s as their imperial capital. New Delhi has government buildings and also houses the Diplomatic Enclave where all the embassies are located. The picturesque 12th-century ruins of citadels built by the first Islamic rulers can be seen in the Qutb-Mehrauli area, and the affluent new middle class suburbs of South Delhi lie close by. Slums and shanty towns dot the outer fringes of the city.



All the contrasts and contradictions of India are particularly visible in the capital: denim-clad youngsters rubbing shoulders with robed sadhus (holy men), and bullock carts travelling alongside the latest luxury cars. Adding to Delhi's fascinating diversity is the fact that it is largely a city of migrants. After the violent Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, millions of refugees, mainly from West Punjab, flocked here in search of a new life. Since then there has been a steady influx of people from all over India. Yet each regional community has retained its distinct cultural identity, making Delhi less a melting pot than a *thali* (platter) whose offerings may be savoured singly or in interesting combinations.



A view of the old city around Jama Masjid, with its bustling streets and crowded buildings

Exploring Delhi

Some of Delhi's most impressive buildings can be seen in the area shown in this map. Vijay Chowk is the vantage point for the grand sweep of Raj buildings grouped on Raisina Hill. To the north, the magnificent Jami Masjid with its busy hive of lanes, is the focus of Old Delhi. To the southeast, the medieval quarter around the tomb of the Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya leads along Mathura Road to the ruined fort, Purana Qila. And to the south, the Mehrauli area (shown on the Greater Delhi map), has a fascinating cluster of monuments built in the 12th and 13th centuries.



Vijay Chowk (see pp72-3), at the base of Raisina Hill, surrounded by government offices

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Historic Buildings, Streets & Neighbourhoods

- Around Kashmiri Gate 77
- Around Vijay Chowk pp72-3 1
- Chandni Chowk pp84-5 17
- Coronation Memorial 23
- Feroze Shah Kotla 21
- Hauz Khas 25
- Humayun's Tomb p83 16
- Jahanpanah 20
- Jantar Mantar 2
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Parks & Gardens

- Lodi Gardens 2
- The Ridge 20

Theatres & Art Galleries

- Mandi House Complex 7





0 metres 200
0 yards 200



LOCATOR MAP

KEY

- Around Vijay Chowk see pp72-3
- Chandni Chowk see pp84-5
- Railway station
- Metro station
- Bus station
- Tourist information
- Parking
- Hospital
- Police station
- Temple
- Mosque
- Gurdwara
- Church
- Tomb
- Post office
- National highway
- Major road

GETTING AROUND

The areas shown here are best covered by the metro, taxi, auto-rickshaw or a hired car and driver. Guided coach tours run by Delhi Tourism (see p 61) show many sights. Avoid buses.



SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* pp690-91
- *Where to Eat* pp 720-21

Street-by-Street: Around Vijay Chowk ①

Vijay Chowk or "Victory Square", a large piazza at the base of Raisina Hill, was planned as a commanding approach to the Viceroy's House, now the Indian President's residence. This is where the "Beating of the Retreat" ceremony takes place each year on 29 January (see p.37). Vijay Chowk is flanked by two long, classical Secretariat buildings (the North and South Blocks), which house several ministries as well as the Prime Minister's Office. Ministers and government officials live in spacious bungalows on the tree-shaded avenues nearby. From Vijay Chowk, Lutyens's grand Central Vista lies ahead – large trees and fountains line the lawns of Rashtrapati Marg up to India Gate, the Starke Canopy and the National Stadium at the far end.



★ Vijay Chowk

This piazza flanked by red sandstone obelisk-shaped fountains faces a grand vista

North Block
Designed by Herbert Baker, has an imposing Central Hall.

Sansad Bhavan
is also known as Parliament House

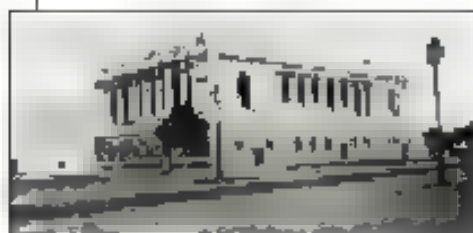


The Iron Gates
Copied from a pair Lutyens saw in Chiswick, England, these are set into ornamental sandstone gateposts. They lead to Rashtrapati Bhavan (see p.74).

KEY

--- Suggested route

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER LUTYENS



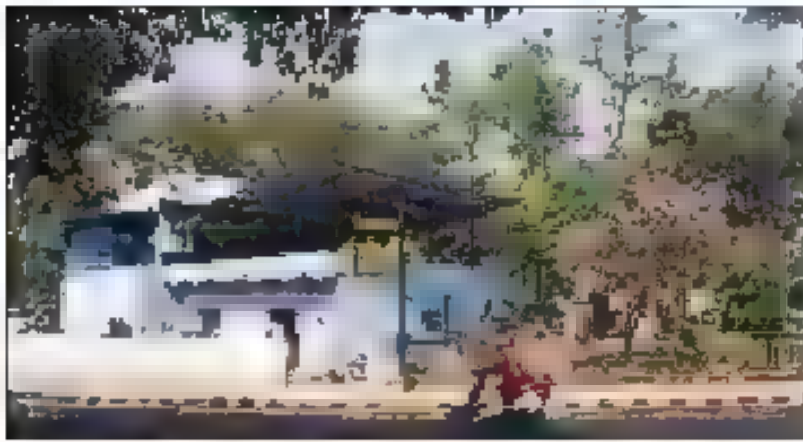
The red sandstone National Archives, designed by Lutyens

Architect Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens (1869–1944). President of the Royal Academy from 1938 to 1944, was commissioned to design India's new capital in 1911. With Herbert Baker, his colleague, it took him 20 years to build the city in a unique style that combined Western Classicism with Indian decorative motifs. The result is an impressive and harmonious synthesis, with Neo-Mughal gardens and grand vistas meeting at vertiginous roundabouts. Delayed by World War I and quarrels between Baker and Lutyens, spiralling costs met by Indian revenues (see Mahatma Gandhi to term it a "white elephant"). Ironically, the British lived here for only 16 years.



★ South Block

The Prime Minister's Office and the Defence Ministry are located within this section of the Secretariat



Sunehri Bagh Mosque

This simple 18th-century mosque, built by a saint called Sayyid Sabib, makes for a picturesque roundabout. The adjoining Sunehri Bagh Road is lined with shady trees – a feature of all Lutyens's avenues.

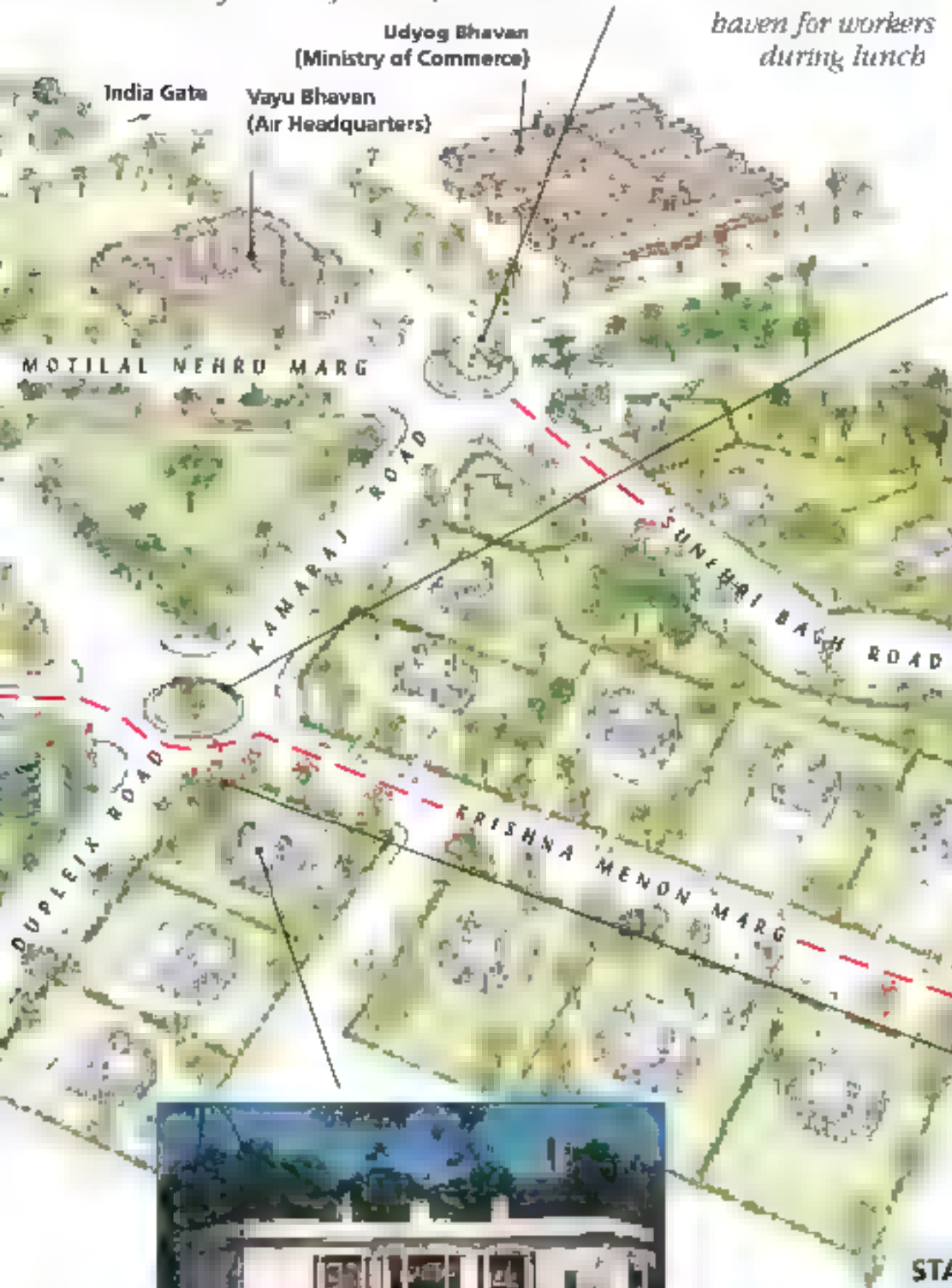


LOCATOR MAP

See Delhi Map pp70–71

Roundabout

Beautifully landscaped road intersections are a haven for workers during lunch.



0 metres 25
0 yards 25



Statue of Kamraj
K. Kamraj was Congress Party President (1963–6)

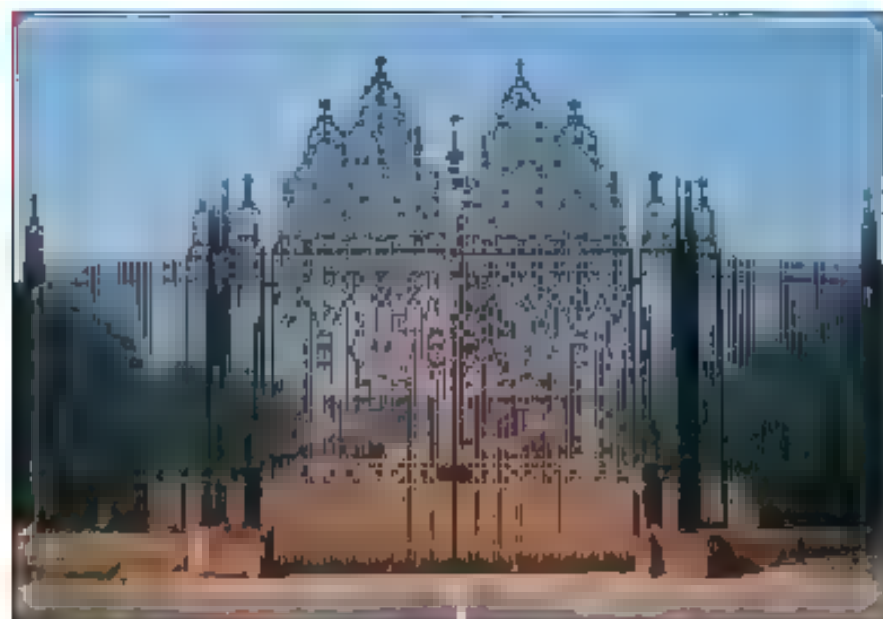


★ Bungalow-lined Avenues

Strict building bylaws preserve the original architecture of the colonial bungalows in the tree-lined avenues of this area.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Vijay Chowk
- ★ South Block
- ★ Bungalow-lined Avenues



Ornate iron gates leading to Rashtrapati Bhavan, designed by Lutyens

Rashtrapati Bhavan ③

Tel (011) 2301 5321 ☐ 9:30am–1pm, 2–4:30pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat
Change of Guard Ceremony
Tel (011) 2301 3592 Apr–Oct Barn, Nov–Mar 10am Sat only. **Mughal Gardens** ☐ Feb–Mar

Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (see p 72) as the British Viceroy's Palace, Rashtrapati Bhavan, situated at the crest of Raisina Hill, is now the official residence of the President of India. A vast copper-clad cupola soars over this elegant beige and red sandstone building which covers an area of 2 ha (5 acres). The *piece de resistance* is the circular Durbar Hall, situated directly beneath the dome, where all important state ceremonies and functions are held.

To the west, the beautifully landscaped grounds include Rashtrapati Bhavan's famed **Mughal Gardens**. These terraced gardens with water-courses and fountains built on three levels are open to visitors in the spring months.

Raisina Hill ③

Cathedral Church of the Redemption **Tel** (011) 2309 2396.
☐ 8am–noon; 4–6pm daily

The barren, treeless grounds around Raisina Hill were selected by the British as the site of the new capital. Now a heavily-guarded, verdant area it is dominated by stately

buildings such as the twin North and South Blocks (see p 72) of the **Secretariat**. The two virtually identical buildings that rise from the top of Raisina Hill, were designed by Sir Herbert Baker, who also designed the grand circular **Sansad Bhavan** (Parliament House) to the north of Vijay Chowk. Both the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) and the Lok Sabha (House of the People) convene here when Parliament is in session. After the December 2001 terrorist attack, Sansad Bhavan is now closed to visitors.

Behind Sansad Bhavan is the Anglican **Cathedral Church of the Redemption**, inspired by Palladio's Church of Il Redentore in Venice. Originally built for senior British officials in 1931, it is now the diocese of the Bishop of the Church of North India.



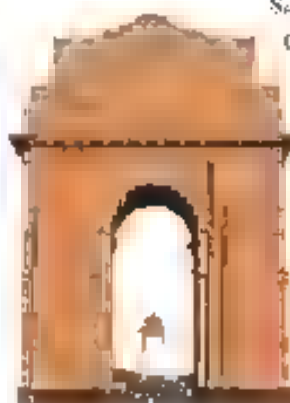
Sansad Bhavan, where the Constitution of India was drafted

Rajpath ④

National Archives Janpath. **Tel** (011) 2338 7509 ☐ 9:30am–6pm Mon–Fri. ☒ Public hols. **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts** Janpath. **Tel** (011) 2338 4938 ☐ 9am–5:30pm Mon–Fri

Running east of Vijay Chowk is Rajpath, a two-mile-long avenue used for parades, with ornamental fountains, canals and lawns on either side. The **National Archives**, situated at the intersection with Janpath, houses a major collection of state records and private papers. Opposite is the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts** with an archive of rare manuscripts. It holds many national and international exhibitions and symposia.

At Rajpath's eastern end is **India Gate**, a massive red sandstone arch built to commemorate the Indian and British soldiers who died in World War I and those who fell in battle in the North-West Frontier Province and the Third Afghan War. An eternal flame burns in memory of the soldiers who died in the 1971



India Gate

India-Pakistan War. Facing India Gate is the sandstone canopy where a statue of King George V was installed in 1936. The statue is now at Coronation Park (see p 88) and the canopy stands empty.

National Museum ⑤

See pp 76–7

National Gallery of Modern Art ⑤

Jaipur House, near India Gate

Tel (011) 2338 5378 ☐ 10am–5pm

Tue–Sun ● Mon & public hols



Jaipur House, the former residence of the maharajas of Jaipur, is one of India's largest museums of modern art, covering the period from the mid-19th century to the present day. Its excellent collections include works by modern Indian painters such as Jamini Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Raja Ravi Varma and Amrita Shergill, as well as contemporary artists such as Ram Kumar and Anjolie Elia Menon. Also on display are works by British artists such as Thomas Daniell and his nephew William Daniell, and an interesting group of "Company Paintings" – 18th- and 19th-century works by Indian artists commissioned specially for the British market.

Mandi House Complex ⑦

Triveni Kala Sangam, Tansen Marg

Tel (011) 2335 6139 ☐ 9:30am–

5pm Mon–Sat ● public hols. ☐

☐ **Rabindra Bhavan**, Ferozeshah

Rd. Tel (011) 2338 1833 ☐

Kamani Auditorium, Copernicus

Marg Tel (011) 2338 8084

Shri Ram Centre, Safdar Hashmi

Marg Tel (011) 2335 2410. ☐ ☐

National School of Drama, Bhaqwan

Das Rd. Tel (011) 2338 8249

For **Tickets** see **Entertainment** p96

Mandi House today the offices of the state-owned television centre, lends its name to this cultural complex encircling the roundabout. **Triveni Kala Sangam** has contemporary art galleries, an open air amphitheatre for concerts and plays, a popular cafe and a bookshop specializing in Indian arts publications. The state-sponsored **Rabindra Bhavan** arts complex houses the national academies of literature (Sahitya Akademi), fine arts and sculpture (Lalit



Connaught Place, the British-built shopping complex in New Delhi.

Kala Akademi) and the performing arts (Sangeet Natak Akademi) in separate wings. All three have libraries and display galleries that sell reproductions. Regular exhibitions of photography and ceramics are also held here.

Kamani

Auditorium, the **Shri Ram Centre** and the **National**

School of Drama are vibrant centres for theatre, music and dance performances.



Mirrorwork skirts on sale at Janpath

Raised as a deliberate contrast to the noises and chaos of an Indian bazaar. The central circle of Connaught Place has

now been renamed **Rajiv Chowk**, and the outer circle **Indira Chowk**. Its arcades and pavements spill over with *paan* kiosks, book stalls and shoe shine boys, while the eclectic mix of shops is

interspersed with eateries and cinema halls. Though no longer Delhi's premier shopping area, its shaded arcades are pleasant to stroll through. The recently built **Central Park** features an amphitheatre, 21 fountains and lush lawns. Nearby popular shopping centres include the state emporia at **Baba Kharak Singh Marg** and the stalls along **Janpath**. **Cottage Industries** (see p97) is also located on Janpath.

Connaught Place ⑧

Shops ☐ 10:30am–8pm Mon–Sat.

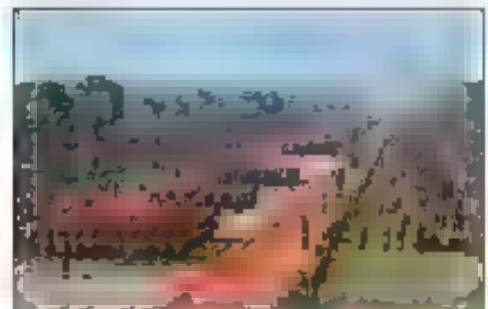
● public hols.

Opened in 1931 and named after the Duke of Connaught, this shopping complex, with its Palladian archways and stuccoed colonnades, was designed by Robert Tor

REPUBLIC DAY PARADE

Ever since 1950, when India became a republic, this parade on 26 January has attracted large crowds despite the often chilly weather. Soldiers and sailors, war veterans and school children and even elephants and camels, march

smartly down Rajpath. Especially popular are the folk dancers and the inventive floats representing each state of the country. A ceremonial flypast by the Indian Air Force signals the end of the always colourful parade.



Republic Day Parade

The National Museum 5



Dancing girl
from 2500 BC

Five millennia of Indian history can be explored at the National Museum, with a collection of more than 200,000 pieces of Indian art. The nucleus collection of about 1,000 artifacts was sent to London in the winter of 1948–9 for an exhibition at the Royal Academy's Burlington House. After its return, it was housed in the Durbar Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan until the present building, built of the same beige and pink stone as the imposing new capital, was complete in 1960. The Museum's collection of Indus Valley relics and Central Asian treasures from the Silk Route is considered among the finest in the world.

★ Nataraja

This 12th-century Chola statue of the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva is the centrepiece of the museum's South Indian bronzes.



The Coins and Indian Scripts Gallery displays an impressive collection of coins and the evolution of the Indian script.

★ Dara Shikoh's Marriage Procession

An 18th-century Mughal miniature painting in gold and natural pigments.



★ Kubera

A rare example of a Hindu god shown as a 2nd-century Kushana (see pp46–7) grandee with marked Central Asian features is among a large collection of Mathura Art.

Ground floor



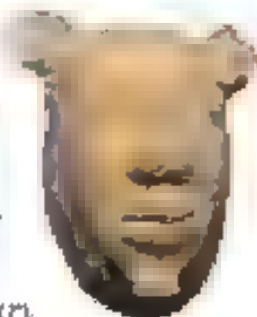
Silk painting,
7th–8th century

THE SERINDIAN COLLECTION

Almost 700 years after the Silk Route fell into disuse, Sir Aurel Stein, a British archaeologist, led a series of expeditions (1900–16) to uncover its treasures. On view at the National Museum, Stein's Central Asian collection of the artifacts he found in the Taklamakan Desert has silk paintings, Buddhist manuscripts and valuable records of life along this ancient trade route.

Terracotta Mask

This unusual human mask made of terracotta dates back to 2,700 BC, as it was unearthed in Mohenjodaro in the early 20th century.



Entrance

Aurangzeb's Sword

The personal sword of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, crafted in 1675 in the Indo-Persian style, has quotations from the Koran inscribed on it

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Janpath Tel (011) 2301 9272
 [] 10am-5pm Tue-Sun []
 Mon & public hols [] [] extra
 charges [] [] 11:30am,
 2:30pm, 4pm. [] [] [] []

Film shows, lectures, presentations and special exhibitions.

Gold Brocade

This 19th century silk wedding sari woven in Varanasi is embellished with motifs in gold thread

Wood carvings in the form of religious statues, carved doors andlintels are some of the exhibits here

Second floor

**★ Illuminated Koran**

A superb example of the elegant Islamic art of calligraphy, this gilded 18th-century Koran is one of a collection that also has a 8th-century Koran in the ancient Kufic script. The latter is among the oldest of its kind in the world.

First floor

KEY TO FLOORPLAN

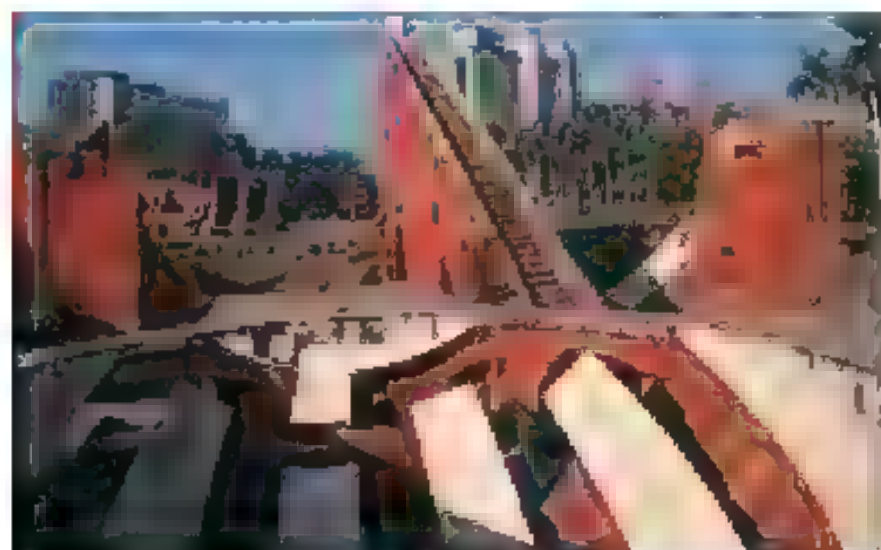
- ☐ Indus Valley Culture
- ☐ Ancient and Medieval Sculpture
- ☐ Chola Bronzes
- ☐ Buddhist Art
- ☐ Indian Miniatures
- ☐ Decorative Arts
- ☐ Manuscripts and Wall Paintings
- ☐ Central Asian Antiquities
- ☐ Textiles, Arms and Armour, Musical Instruments
- ☐ Coins and Indian Scripts
- ☐ Jewellery
- ☐ Wood carvings

STAR EXHIBITS

- ★ Dara Shikoh's Marriage Procession
- ★ Nataraja
- ★ Kubera
- ★ Illuminated Koran

GALLERY GUIDE

The collection is displayed on three floors, grouped according to theme, epoch and style. The central foyer itself has a display of sculptures from various parts of the country. The museum also has a library and auditorium where film shows and lectures are regularly held. Information on these is published in the newspapers. Information regarding catalogues and souvenirs can be had at the ticket office in the foyer. The display is changed from time to time for variety, and special exhibitions are also mounted.



The brick and plaster astronomical instruments in Jantar Mantar

Jantar Mantar 9

Sansad Marg ☐ daily 153

Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur, a keen astronomer, built this observatory in 1724 because he wanted to calculate planetary positions and alignments accurately in order to perform sacred rituals and *pujas* at propitious moments. One of the five observatories he built (see pp 358–9), Jantar Mantar's instruments are large and fixed, making them resistant to vibration and therefore exact. The Samrat Yantra, a right-angled triangle whose hypotenuse is parallel to the earth's axis, is a gigantic sundial, with two brick quadrants on either side of it to measure the sun's shadow. The Ram Yantra reads the altitude of the sun, and the Jai Prakash Yantra (invented by Jai Singh II) measures the time of the spring equinox. Now obsolete, the observatory lies in the centre of a pleasant park surrounded by high-rises.

Lakshmi Narayan Mandir 10

Mandir Marg ☐ daily

Built in 1938 by the industrialist BD Birla, this was one of the earliest Indian temples without caste restrictions, and Mahatma Gandhi attended its first *puja*. A fairly typical example of modern Indian temple architecture, with its marble entrance and ochre and maroon *shikharas* (spires), the Birla Mandir, as it is popularly known, has images of Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi in its main shrine. Subsidiary shrines set around the courtyard, are inscribed with verses from sacred Hindu texts and are decorated with paintings depicting scenes from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library 11

Teen Murti Marg Tel (011) 2301 4475. ☐ Tue–Sun ☑ public hols
Nehru Planetarium Tel (011) 2301 2944. ☑ Shows 1 30am, 3pm

The residence of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister. Teen Murti Bhavan was converted into a museum and library for research scholars after Nehru's death in 1964. This house has a special place in modern Indian history because it was also the home of two future prime ministers – Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi and his grandson Rajiv Gandhi, both of whom were assassinated (see p 57). Nehru's bedroom and study, still exactly as he left them, reflect his austere yet elegant personality and his eclectic taste in books.



Teen Murti Memorial

The extensive grounds are home to the **Nehru Planetarium** and the square, three-arched **Kushak Mahal**, a 14th-century hunting lodge built by Sultan Feroze Shah Tughluq (see p 57). On the roundabout in front of the house stands the **Teen Murti** ("Three Statues") **Memorial**. This is dedicated to the Indian soldiers who died in World War I. The house derives its name from this landmark.



Teen Murti Bhavan, Nehru's official residence, now the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp 690–91 and pp 720–21



Athpula, the 17th-century bridge near the entrance to Lodi Gardens on South End Road

Lodi Gardens ⑫

Entrance on Lodi Rd & South End Rd ☐ daily ⑪

Lodi Gardens is one of Delhi's most picturesque parks, and a favourite haunt of joggers, yoga enthusiasts, political newsgawks accompanied by their bodyguards, and families who come to picnic on weekends. Landscaped at the behest of Lady Willingdon, the vicerine, in 1936, the park acts as a "green lung" for the people of Delhi. Its tree-lined pathways and well-kept lawns and flowerbeds are laid out around the imposing 15th-century tombs of the Sayyid and Lodi dynasties, Delhi's last sultans. Many of them still have traces of the original turquoise tilework and calligraphy. The elegantly proportioned octagonal **Tomb of Muhammad Shah** (r 1434–44), the third ruler of the Sayyid dynasty, is said to be the oldest in the garden. The largest of the structures is the **Bara Gumbad** ("Big Dome") with an attached mosque built in 1494, and a guesthouse. At the South End Road entrance to the gardens is a lovely stone bridge called **Athpula** (literally "eight piers"), said to date from the 17th century. To its west are ramparts that enclose the **Tomb of Sikander Lodi** (r 1489–1517).

Purana Qila ⑬

Mathura Rd. **Tel** (011) 2435 4260

☐ sunrise–sunset daily **Museum**
Tel (011) 2435 5387 ☐ 10am–5pm
● Friday ⑪ **Tickets:** from site and the Delhi Tourism office **Tel** (011) 3320 005

Purana Qila, literally "Old Fort", stands on an ancient site that has been continuously occupied since 1000 BC, as archaeological excavations have revealed. The brooding ramparts of the fort now enclose the remains of the sixth city of Delhi, **Dinpanah** (see p91), which was begun by the second Muslim emperor Humayun. His reign, however, was short and in 1540 he was overthrown by the Afghan chieftain Sher Shah Suri (see p99). Sher Shah added several new structures and renamed the citadel **Shergarh** ("Lion's Fort"). After Sher Shah's death Humayun regained his throne. Of the many palaces, barracks and other edifices built by these two rulers, only Sher Shah's mosque and a building that was probably Humayun's library remain standing today.

The **Qila-i-Kuhna Mosque**, built in 1541, is a superbly proportioned structure with fine decorative inlay work in

red and white marble and slate. To the south of the mosque is Humayun's library known as **Sher Mandal**. A double-storeyed octagonal tower of red sandstone, it is crowned by an elaborate **chhatra** (open pavilion) supported by eight pillars. This was the tragic spot where the devout emperor, hurrying to kneel on the steps for the evening prayer, missed his footing and tumbled to his death in January 1556. The ramparts of the Purana Qila have three principal gateways, of which the imposing red sandstone **Bara Darwaza** on the western wall is the main entrance. Humayun's Tomb (see p83) can be seen from the southern gate.



Chhatra with decorative tilework



Bara Darwaza, Purana Qila

Crafts Museum 14



Wooden doll
on toy swing

For centuries, Indian craftsmen such as potters, weavers, masons and carvers, have created a range of objects for everyday use that are both beautiful and practical. A unique project was started in 1956 to promote indigenous artisans by giving them a place to display their work and by the early 1980s, over 20 000

objects had been collected. This was the core around which India's first Crafts Museum developed.



Sarota, a 19th-century betel nut
cracker from South India



★ Bandhini Odhni

This exquisite veil is the work of the Bhansali tribe in Kutch, Gujarat. Tie-and-dye (bandhani) is done by tying threads around grains to form a pattern, and dyeing the cloth in different colours.



Mukhalinga

This rare, late 19th-century phallic image (linga) with a human face (mukha) is made of brass and silver. The third eye and tiny snake-earrings are symbols of Shiva.

STAR EXHIBITS

- ★ Bandhini Odhni
- ★ Charraku
- ★ Bhuta Figure



Crafts Demonstration Area

Artisans from all over India set up workshops each month (barring the monsoon) to display their skills to visitors.

Amphitheatre

KEY

- ☐ Gallery of Aristocratic Arts
- ☐ Gallery of Ritual Arts
- ☐ Gallery of Folk and Tribal Cultures
- ☐ Gallery of Textiles
- ☐ Non-exhibition space
- ☐ Temporary exhibitions gallery
- ☐ Visual store



Yashoda and Krishna

This mid-20th-century plaster cast statuette from South India is an interesting example of popular kitsch, inspired by gods and mythology. It is cheap and easy to reproduce for use in a domestic shrine.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bhairon Marg. Tel (011) 2337

8876. ☐ Tue–Sun ☒ public

hols. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Crafts demonstration ☐ Oct–
Jun: daily

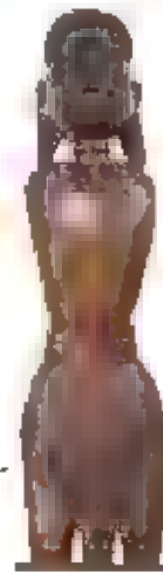


★ Charraku

These enormous circular vessels are cast of an alloy known as bell metal. They are still used in Kerala for wedding feasts or at temples for making payasam (a type of rice pudding) for devotees during festivals.

Madhubani Painting

This traditional wall painting in natural pigments, depicting a wedding scene, is by Ganga Devi, a famous 20th-century woman painter from Bihar (see p217).



★ Bhuta Figure

These life-sized wooden figures, artifacts from the Bhuta cult of spirit worship in the southern state of Karnataka (see p526), date back to the early 19th century.

Library

Entrance

GALLERY GUIDE

The museum's exhibits are spread over two floors of the complex, divided into separate areas by courtyards that also double up as exhibition spaces. A large open area is used for live art displays by visiting artists each month, except during the rainy season.



The Crafts Museum Shop

This shop sells a fine selection of items made by indigenous artisans, including household objects, decorative pieces and textiles.

Nizamuddin Complex 15

W of Mathura Rd. **Dargah** ☐ daily
Qawwali performance 7pm Thu
 ☞ Urs (Jul & Dec)

This medieval settlement, or *basti*, is named after Sheikh Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, whose grave and hospice are located here. Nizamuddin belonged to a fraternity of Sufi mystics, the Chishtis, respected for their ascetic piety and disdain for material desires, and was a spiritual descendant of Moinuddin Chishti (see p376). His daily assemblies drew both the rich and the poor, who believed that he was a "friend of God" who would intercede on their behalf on Judgement Day. He died in 1325 but his disciples call him a *zinda pir* (living spirit) who continues to heed their pleas. A three-day Urs is



Colourful stalls in the alley leading to Nizamuddin's tomb



Congregational area, Nizamuddin

observed, with qawwalis sung on the anniversary of his death, and another on the death of his disciple Amir Khusrau.

A winding alley leads to the saint's grave. It is crowded with mendicants and lined with stalls selling flowers and *chadors* (ceremonial cloths), polychrome clocks and prints of Mecca. The main congregational area is a marble pavilion (rebuilt in 1562) where, every Thursday evening, followers sing devotional songs composed by the celebrated Persian poet, Amir Khusrau (1253–1325). Women are denied entry beyond the outer verandah but may peer through *jalis* into the small dark chamber where the saint's grave lies draped with a rose petal-strewn cloth surrounded by imams who continuously recite verses from the Koran. Amir Khusrau is buried in the complex, as

are other eminent disciples, such as Jahanara Begum.

Across the western side of the open courtyard is the red sandstone Jama' Khana Mosque, built in 1325. To its north is a *baoli* (stepwell), excavated in secret while Tughlaqabad (see p95) was being built, because Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq had banned all building activities elsewhere. Legend has it that labourers worked here at night with the help of lamps lit not with oil but with water blessed by Nasiruddin Nizamuddin's successor. The early 16th-century **Tomb of Atgah Khan** is to the north. A powerful minister in Emperor Akbar's court, he was murdered by



Tomb of the famous poet Mirza Ghalib

Adham Khan, a political rival (see p93). The open marble pavilion **Chaunsath Khamba** ("64 pillars"), is close by and just outside is an enclosure containing the simple grave

of Mirza Ghalib (1780–1869).

One of the greatest poets of his time, Ghalib wrote in both Urdu and Persian, and his verses are still recited. Nearby is the **Ghalib Academy**, a repository of paintings and manuscripts.

Despite its crowds, the *basti* preserves with miraculous serenity the legend of Nizamuddin, described by Khusrau as "a king without throne or crown, with kings in need of the dust of his feet".

NIZAMUDDIN COMPLEX

One of Delhi's historic necropolises, many of the saint's disciples, such as Amir Khusrau and Jahanara Begum. Shah Jahan's favourite daughter, are buried close to their master. Jahanara's epitaph echoes her master's teachings. "Let naught cover my grave save the green grass for grass well suffices as a covering for the grave of the lowly."



Humayun's Tomb



Marble star
inlaid on panel

Humayun, the second Mughal emperor (see p 79), is buried in this tomb, the first great example of a Mughal garden tomb, and inspiration for several later monuments, such as the incomparable Taj Mahal (see pp 172-3). Built in 1565 by Persian architect Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, it was commissioned by

Humayun's senior widow, Haji Begum. Often called 'a dormitory of the House of Timur', the graves in its chambers include Humayun's wives and Dara Shukoh, Shah Jahan's scholarly son. Also in the complex are the octagonal tomb and mosque of Isa Khan, a 16th century nobleman, and the tomb of Humayun's favourite barber. The Arab ki Sarai was a rest house for the Persian masons who built the tomb.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Off Mathura Rd, Bharat Scout
Guide Marg Tel (011, 2461
9861 ☐ daily 📷 📺 📱 📶



The perfectly symmetrical Humayun's Tomb as seen from the entrance

The Dome

This imposing white marble double dome is a complete half sphere, and is surmounted by a finial with a crescent in the Persian style. Later Mughal finials, such as the one at the Taj Mahal, added a lotus base.

Geometric designs
inlaid on panels



Jahs

Fine trellis work in stone later became a signature Mughal feature.



The Tomb Chamber

The plain white marble sarcophagus stands on a simple black and white marble platform. The grave itself, no longer accessible, lies in the dark, but filled basement below.

The imposing plinth is decorated with red sandstone arches and consists of multiple chambers, a departure from the single chamber of previous tombs.

Street-by-Street: Chandni Chowk ⑩

Once Shahjahanabad's (see p91) most elegant boulevard Chandni Chowk ("Silvery, Moonlit Square") laid out in 1648, had a canal running through it, and was lined with grand shops and mansions. Today, it is still the heart of Old Delhi, where religious and commercial activity mix easily. At the entrance to Chandni Chowk is the Digambar Jain Temple, the first of many shrines along its length. Built in 1656, it also houses a unique hospital for birds.



Charity box for donations at the Bird Hospital

Sisganj Gurdwara
Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh guru, was beheaded at this site in 1675

Fatehpuri Masjid
(built in 1650)

Nar Sarak

KINARI BAZAAR

CHANDNI CHOWK

DARIBA KALAN

BAZAAR GULIYAN

CHEL PURI

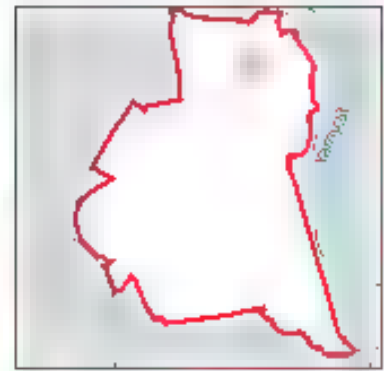
Sunehri Masjid
The "Golden Mosque" with three gilt domes, was built in 1722. On 22 March 1739, Persian invader Nadir Shah stood on its roof to watch the massacre of Delhi's citizens

Shiv Temple

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Kinari Bazaar
- ★ Lahore Gate
- ★ Dariba Kalan
- ★ Jami Masjid

★ **Kinari Bazaar**
Tightly packed stalls sell all manner of glittering gold and silver trimmings such as braids, tinsel, garlands and turbans for weddings and festivals

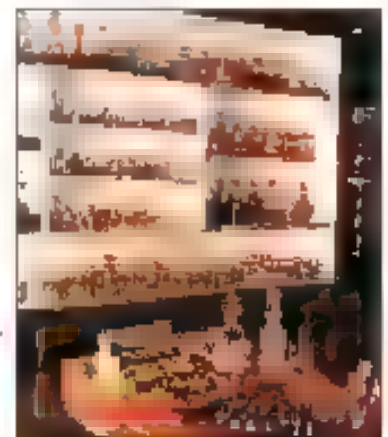


★ Lahore Gate

This imposing red sandstone gateway is the main entrance to the Red Fort (see p86). The Prime Minister addresses the Independence Day rally here

LOCATOR MAP

See Delhi Map pp70-71



★ Dariba Kalan

Gold and silver ornaments are sold along this lane. Gulab Singh's famous perfume shop (see p96) is located here



★ Jami Masjid

India's largest mosque, Jami Masjid, with its soaring minarets and vast marble domes, is grandly positioned on top of a mound (see p86)

Government Girls Senior Secondary School

Karim's

0 metres 25
0 yards 25

KEY

--- Suggested route

Karim's

Tucked away in a narrow lane to the south of Jami Masjid is

Delhi's most authentic Mughlai eatery (see p720). Named after a legendary 19th-century chef, the restaurant is now run by his descendants





The sandstone and marble Jami Masjid, India's largest mosque

Jami Masjid 18

Off Netaji Subhash Marg for non-Muslims during prayer time and after 5pm. extra charges

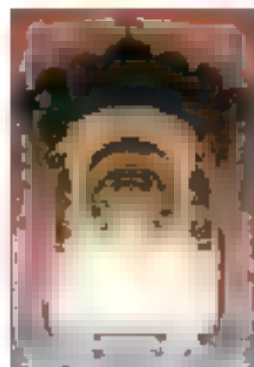
This grand mosque, with three imposing black and white marble domes, and twin minarets framing its great central arch, was built in 1656 by the Emperor Shah Jahan on a natural mound. It took six years and 5,000 workers to construct, at a cost of nearly a million rupees. A magnificent flight of sandstone steps leads to the great arched entrances. In Aurangzeb's time, the area attracted horse sellers and jugglers; today shoe menders and beggars mill around. The huge 28-m (92-ft) square courtyard can accommodate up to 20,000 people at Friday prayer sessions and at Id, when it looks like a sea of worshippers. Next to the *dhikha* (water tank) for the ritual ablutions, is the platform where, before loudspeakers took over, a second

prayer leader echoed the imam's words and actions for worshippers too far from the pulpit for a clear view.

Red Fort 19

Chandni Chowk Tel (011) 2327 7705
 Tue-Sun. public hrs. Son et Lumière Sep-Oct & Feb-Apr 8.30-9.30pm daily. Nov-Jan 7.30-8.30pm daily. May-Aug 9-10pm daily. Museum Tue-Sun

Red sandstone battlements give this imperial citadel its name. La ("Red") Qila ("Fort") Commissioned by Shah Jahan in 1639, it took nine years to build and was the seat of Mughal power until 1857 when the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar was dethroned and exiled. Today the Red Fort remains a powerful symbol of Indian nationhood



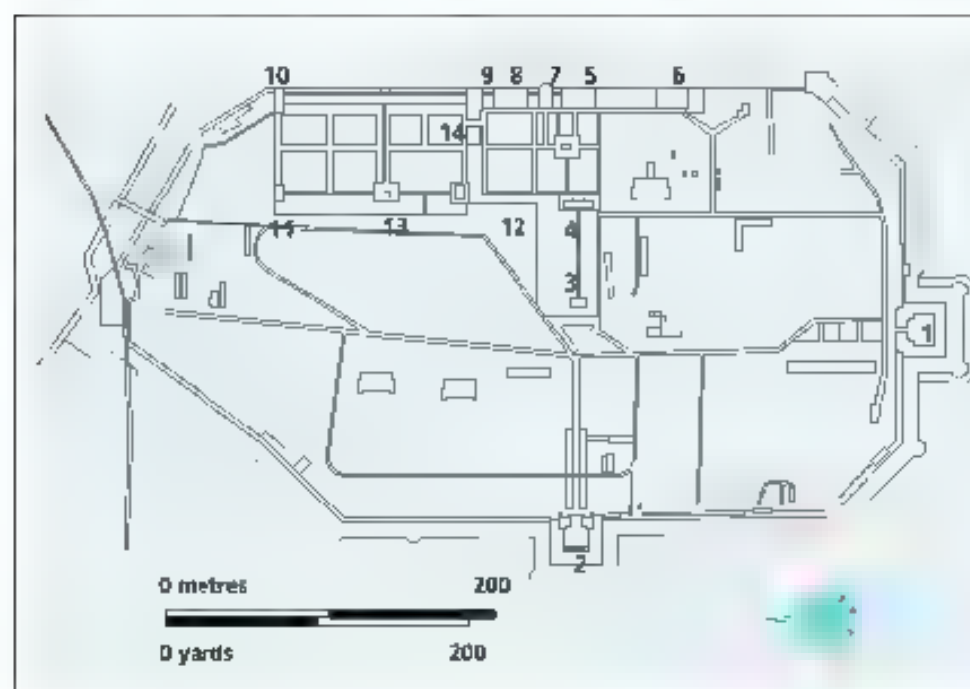
The throne canopy at the Diwan-i-Aam

It was here that the national flag was hoisted for the first time when India became an independent nation on 15 August 1947.

Entry is through **Lahore Gate**. One of the fort's six gateways, this leads on to the covered bazaar of **Chatta Chowk**, where jewels and brocades were once sold. Beyond this lies the **Naqqar Khana**, a pavilion where ceremonial music was played three times a day.

A path from here leads to the **Diwan-i-Aam**, a 60-pillared, red sandstone hall where the emperor gave daily audience to the public. The emperor sat beneath the lavishly carved stone canopy while the low bench in front of it was for his chief minister. Beyond this hall is the **Rang Mahal**. Inside its gilded chambers, once exclusively for women, is an inland marble fountain shaped like an open lotus.

Nearby is the **Khas Mahal**, the emperor's royal apartments with special rooms for private worship and for sleeping. The Robe Room ("Tosh Khana") has a superb marble *jali* screen carved with the scales of justice, a motif seen in many miniature paintings. North of the Khas Mahal is the **Diwan-i-Khas**, built completely of white marble. The legendary Peacock Throne, embedded



RED FORT

- 1 Delhi Gate
- 2 Lahore Gate
- 3 Naqqar Khana
- 4 Diwan-i-Aam
- 5 Rang Mahal
- 6 Moti Mahal
- 7 Khas Mahal
- 8 Diwan-i-Khas
- 9 Hamams
- 10 Shah Burj
- 11 Sarwan
- 12 Bhadon
- 13 Zafar Mahal
- 14 Moti Masjid

with priceless jewels was kept here until it was taken away as war booty by the Persian chieftain Nadir Shah in 1739. The walls and pillars of this exclusive pavilion, where the emperor met his most trusted nobles, were once inlaid with gems. The ceiling was of silver inlaid with precious stones.

A little further away are the **Hamams** (Royal Baths) with inlaid marble floors and three enclosures. The first chamber provided hot vapour, the second scented rosewater through sculpted fountains, and the third cold water.

To the west of the hamams is the elegant little **Moti Masjid** ("Pearl Mosque"), named after the pearly sheen of its marble. It was built by Emperor Aurangzeb in 1659.



The Ashoka Pillar, rising above the ruins of Feroze Shah Kotla

Just across the road is the **Gandhi National Museum** crammed with memorabilia including Gandhi's letters and diaries. A framed plaque on the wall sets out his simple philosophy: "Non-violence is the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant... it is then possible for a single individual to defy the might of an unjust empire."

Feroze Shah Kotla ㉑

Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg ☐ daily

Only some ramparts and ruined structures remain of Feroze Shah Kotla, the palace complex of Ferozabad. Delhi's fifth city (see p91), erected by that indefatigable builder Feroze Shah Tughluq. Entry is from the gate next to the Indian Express Building. At one end of the walled enclosure stand the roofless ruins of the Jamī Masjid, of which only the rear wall is

still extant. This was once Delhi's largest mosque and, according to popular legend, Timur, the Mongol conqueror from Samarkand who sacked Delhi in 1398, came here to say his Friday prayers.

Next to the mosque are the remains of a pyramidal structure, topped by one of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka's polished stone pillars (see p42). Brought from the Punjab, it was installed here in 1356 by Feroze Shah. It was from the inscriptions on this pillar that James Prinsep, the Oriental linguist, deciphered the Brahmi script, a forerunner of the modern Devanagari, in 1837.

Khuni Darwaza (the Bloodstained Gate"), opposite the Express Building, was built by Sher Shah Sur as one of the gates to his city (see p75). This was where the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar's sons were shot by Lieutenant Hodson after the Mutiny of 1857 was quashed (see p53).

Gandhi's *samadhi* at Rajghat

Rajghat ㉒

Mahatma Gandhi Rd. ☐ daily

Prayer meetings 5pm Fri.

Gandhi National Museum

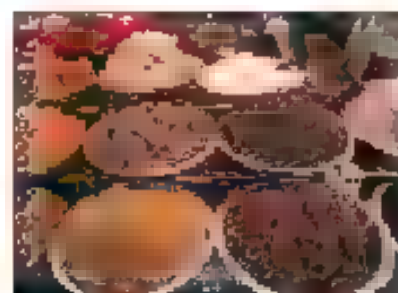
Tel (011, 2332 8310) ☐ Tue-Sun

☒ public hols. Film shows 4-5pm Sat & Sun

India's most potent symbol of nationhood, Rajghat is the site of Mahatma Gandhi's cremation. A somber black granite platform inscribed with his last words, *He Ram!* ("Oh God") now stands here. The only splash of colour comes from the garlands of orange marigolds that are draped over the platform. At visiting heads of state are taken to this *samadhi* (monument) to lay wreaths in memory of the "Father of the Nation". On Gandhi's birthday (2 Oct) and death anniversary (30 Jan), the nation's leaders gather here for prayer meetings.

THE BAZAARS OF OLD DELHI

Old Delhi's bazaars are legendary. An English visitor over a 100 years ago, wrote in praise of the "Cashmere shawls, gold and silver embroidery, jewellery, enamels and carpets" found here. Today the great wholesale bazaars of Chandni



Indian spices on sale in Khari Baoli, Asia's largest spice market

Chowk still retain a souk-like quality. Their narrow streets are lined with shops, whose goods spill out onto the pavements. Each lane specializes in a commodity. Dariba Kalan, for instance, is the lane of jewellers and silversmiths while Kinari Bazaar (see p84) sells a bewildering array of tinsel and sequins.

Around Kashmiri Gate 22

Between Nicholson Rd, Ramia
Chandok Marg & Church Rd.
St James's Church Lothian Rd
Tel (011) 2386 0873 ☐ daily
☐ English. 9am-Sun

This landmark, from where the Mughals would set off to spend their summers in Kashmir, resonates with memories of the Mutiny of 1857 (see p53). The short stretch between Kashmiri Gate and the Old Delhi General Post Office (GPO) witnessed bitter fighting, as the city of Delhi lay under siege by the British. A final assault led to the blasting of the Gate, and a plaque on its western side honours "the engineers and miners who died while clearing the gate for British forces on September 14, 1857". In the 1920s, this area was also a favourite haunt of the British residents living in nearby Civil Lines.

The historic **St James's Church**, Delhi's oldest, is the most striking sight in the vicinity. It was consecrated in 1836 by Colonel James Skinner. A flamboyant adventurer of mixed parentage who was rejected by the British Army, Skinner raised his own cavalry regiment which proceeded to fight with great distinction. The church was erected in fulfilment of a vow Skinner made on the battle-field. An unusual structure, the church is in the shape of a Greek cross, surmounted by an imposing eight-leafed dome. Its two stained-glass windows were installed in the 1860s. A marble tablet in front of the altar marks Skinner's simple grave.



The impressive yellow and white edifice of St James's Church



Statues of former viceroys around the Coronation Memorial

Coronation Memorial 23

S of NH1 Bypass. ☐ daily

The Royal Durbar, held in 1911 to proclaim the accession of George V as King Emperor of India, was held at this site. A red sandstone obelisk commemorates the coronation. More than 100,000 people thronged to see the King Emperor and Queen Empress sit beneath a golden dome mounted on a crimson canopy. Today, it is a dusty and forlorn spot surrounded by statues of former viceroys, including

Lords Hardinge and Wellington (distinguished for their role in the construction of New Delhi). Towering over them all is the 22-m (72-ft) high statue of the King Emperor himself, which was removed from the Statue Canopy at India Gate (see p74) and installed here in the 1960s. About 3 km (2 miles) southeast is a forested park area known as the **Northern Ridge**, cut through by Ridge

Road and Ram Jhansi Road. At its southern end lies the **Mutiny Memorial** (known locally as Ahtgarh), a Victorian Gothic tower which commemorates the soldiers both British and native who were killed in 1857. Panoramic views of Old Delhi can be enjoyed from here.

Running parallel to the Northern Ridge is the sprawling **Delhi University** area. St Stephen's College, the most distinguished of the colleges dotting the campus, was designed by Walter George in 1938. The office of the Vice-Chancellor, once the guesthouse for British officials, is also the spot where the young Lord Louis Mountbatten proposed to Edwina Ashley in 1922. A plaque celebrates the event. They eventually

became India's last viceroy and vicereine.

The Ridge 24

Upper Ridge Rd. ☐ daily **Buddha Jayanti Park** ☐ daily

Delhi's ridge, the last outcrop of the Aravalli Hills extending northwards from Rajasthan, runs diagonally across the city from southwest to northeast. The area was originally developed by Feroze Shah Tughlaq in the late 14th century as his hunting resort. The ruins of his many lodges can still be seen here. This green belt of



Coronation Memorial

undulating, rocky terrain is covered by dense scrub forest consisting mainly of *Laburnum* (*Cassia fistula*), *kukar* (*Acacia arabica*) and flame of the forest (*Butea monosperma*), interspersed with bingai sp asies of bougainvillea.

A large area in the centre is now the **Buddha Jayanti Park**, a peaceful, well-manicured enclave with paved paths. Pipal (*Ficus religiosa*) trees abound, and on a small, ornamental island is a simple sandstone pavilion shading the large gilt-covered statue of the Buddha installed by the 14th Dalai Lama in 1993. An inscription nearby quotes the Dalai Lama: "Human beings have the capacity to bequeath to future generations a world that is truly human." Every year in May, Buddhist devotees celebrate Buddha Jayanti here (see p 35).

The National Rail Museum 25

Chanakyaपुरi **Tel** (011) 2688 0804.
☐ Tue-Sun ☐ public hols.
☐ extra for train rides. ☐

India's railway network can boast some astonishing statistics. It has a route length of 63,360 km (39,370 miles) and tracks that cover 108,513 km (67,427 miles). There are about 7,150 stations, 12,600 passenger trains, and 1,350 goods trains that run every day. The railways employ 1.6 million people, while 13 million passengers travel by train each day, consuming 6 million meals through the course of their journey.

This museum encapsulates the history of Indian railways. Steam locomotive enthusiasts

will appreciate the collection that traces the development of the Indian railways from 1853, when the first 34 km (21 miles) of railway between Bombay (now Mumbai) and Thane was laid. The wealth of memorabilia on display inside includes the skull of an elephant that collided with a mail train at Golkara in 1894, and a realistic model of an 1868 first-class passenger coach with separate compartments for accompanying servants. Outside are several retired steam locomotives built in Manchester and Glasgow in the late 19th century, and the salon that carried the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) on his travels during the 1876 Royal Durbar. A "toy train" offers rides around the compound, and the shop sells a range of model locomotives.

Safdarjung's Tomb 26

Aurobindo Marg. **Tel** (011) 2301 7293 ☐ daily ☐ extra charges for video photography. ☐

This is the last of Delhi's garden tombs and was built in 1754 for Safdarjung, the powerful prime minister of Muhammad Shah, the Mughal emperor between 1719 and 1748. Marble was allegedly stripped from the tomb of Asrar Rahim Khan-i-Khanan in Nizamuddin to construct this rather florid example of late Mughal architecture. Approached by an ornate gateway, the top storey of which houses the library of the

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the tomb has an exaggerated dome and stands in a *charbagh*, a garden cut by water channels into four parts. Its façade is extensively ornamented with well-preserved plaster carving and the central chamber has some fine stone inlay work on the floor.



A well-stocked shop selling imported foodstuffs at INA Market

INA Market 27

Aurobindo Marg. **Shops** ☐ Tue-Sun

This lively bazaar retains all the trappings of a traditional Indian market but also sells imported foodstuffs such as cheese, pasta and exotic varieties of seafood. The stalls are crammed together under a ramshackle roof mostly corrugated iron and oilcloth, and sell every manner of stainless steel utensils, spices, Punjabi pickles, readymade garments and even live chickens. Tiny restaurants in between offer Indian fast food. Diplomats, out-of-town shoppers and locals all patronize this market for its reasonable prices and wide variety of products.

The name is derived from Indian National Airports, as the adjacent colony used to house employees of the nearby Safdarjung Aerodrome. Built in the 1930s, the aerodrome was the headquarters of the South Eastern Command Air Wing during World War II. It now contains the offices of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Delhi Gating Club. Indian Airlines also has a 24-hour booking office here (see p 73).



A late 19th-century steam engine at the National Rail Museum



The double-storeyed madrasa (college) at Hauz Khas

Hauz Khas 28

W of Aurobindo Marg. **Monuments**

☐ daily

Beyond the boutiques, art galleries and restaurants that have taken over the village of Hauz Khas, are the medieval monuments from Feroze Shah Tughluq's reign. In 1352, the sultan erected a number of buildings on the banks of Hauz Khas, the large tank which was excavated by Alaaddin Khilji for his city of Siri. The tank, which shares its name with the surrounding village, is now dry.

Contemporary accounts claim that Feroze Shah was a prolific builder, and during his 37-year reign he constructed an astounding 40 mosques, 200 towns, 100 public baths and about 30 reservoirs.

Among the buildings around Hauz Khas are a *madrasa*, Feroze Shah's tomb and the ruins of a small mosque. The *madrasa* is built close to the edge of the tank. Plaster carvings and niches for books can be seen inside. The *chhatris* (open pavilions) in the entrance forecourt are said to cover the teachers' burial mounds. At one end of the *madrasa* lies the austere tomb of Feroze Shah. Wine-red painted plaster calligraphy decorates its interior.

The complex is best viewed in the afternoon, when sunlight filters through the *jalis* to cover the graves of the sultan, his sons and grandson with delicate star-shaped shadows

East of Hauz Khas, off Aurobindo Marg, is a small tapering structure called **Chor Minar** ("Tower of Thieves") dating back to the 14th-century Khilji period. Its walls, pockmarked with holes, are said to have held the severed heads of thieves intended to deter others from crime.

Close by, to the northwest, is the **Nili Masjid** ("Blue Mosque"). Named after the blue tiles above its eaves, it was built in 1505 by a certain Kasumbhul, nurse to the governor of Delhi's son.

Khirkkee 29

N of Press Enclave Marg

Monuments ☐ daily

The unusual two-storeyed Khirkkee ("Windows") Mosque, built by Feroze Shah Tughluq's prime minister Khan-i-Jahan Janan Shah, is



The fortress-like Khirkkee Mosque

the mid-14th century lends its name to this little village in South Delhi. The mosque has a fortress-like appearance, broken by rows of arched windows, which give the mosque its name. Its innovative design was not repeated again as its many pilared divisions were found impractical for large congregations.

Further down is **Satpula**, the seven-arched stone weir built by Muhammad bin Tughluq in 1326. It formed part of a reservoir used for irrigation, and also made up a portion of the fortified wall enclosing Jahanpanah.



An arched window with a carved stone *jali*, Khirkkee Mosque

Jahanpanah 30

S of Panchsheel Park. **Monuments**

☐ daily

In the heart of Jahanpanah, Muhammad bin Tughluq's capital, stands **Begumpuri Mosque**, also built by Khan-i-Jahan Janan Shah. (Ask specifically for the old mosque, as a new one is located nearby.) The mosque is remarkable for its 44 domes which surmount the cloisters surrounding the central courtyard. It is said that in times of need, this mosque also functioned as a treasury, a granary and a general meeting place.

To the north is the palace of **Bijay Mandal**, from where, according to the 14th-century Arab traveler Ibn Batuta, Muhammad bin Tughluq reviewed his troops. The upper platform offers a grand view of Delhi, extending from the Qutb Minar to Humayun's Tomb and beyond.

Early Capitals of Delhi

Delhi's famous "seven cities" range from the 12th-century Qila Rai Pithora built by Prithvira Chauhan to the imperial Shahjahanabad, constructed by the Mughals in the 17th century. Each of these cities comprised the settlements that grew around the forts erected by powerful sultans with territorial ambitions.



Purana Qila

As the Delhi Sultans consolidated their territories, they moved their defensively situated capitals in the rocky outcrops of the Aravallis to the northeast towards the open plains by the banks of the Yamuna. Today Delhi is an amalgam of the ruins of medieval citadels, palaces, tombs and mosques and an ever-expanding modern concrete jungle.



Shahjahanabad was Delhi's seventh city, built between 1638 and 1649 by Shah Jahan who shifted the Mughal capital here from Agra (see pp168-77).

Ferozabad (see p87), stretching north from Hauz Khas to the banks of the Yamuna, is Delhi's fifth city, built by Feroze Shah Tughlaq (r 1351-88).



Shahjahanabad

Ferozabad

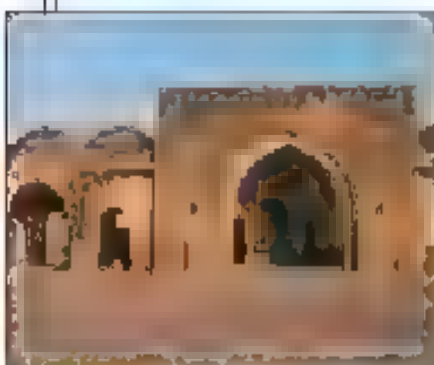
Siri, Delhi's second city, can still be seen near the Siri Fort Auditorium and the adjacent village of Shahpur Jat. The once prosperous city of Siri was built by Alauddin Khilji in 1303.



Purana Qila



Purana Qila (see p79) the citadel of Delhi's sixth city, Durgamah, was built by Humayun. It was captured and occupied by the Afghan chieftain Sher Shah Suri (r 1540-45) who called it Shergarh.



Jahanpanah was built by Muhammad bin Tughlaq (r 1325-51) as a walled enclosure to link Qila Rai Pithora and Siri. The ruined battlements of Delhi's fourth city stand near Chiragh.

Qila Rai Pithora was the first of Delhi's seven cities, built by the Chauhans in about 1180. In 1192, it was captured by Qutbuddin Aibak who established his capital here (see pp92-3).



Tughluqabad



Tughluqabad (see p95) a dramatic fort on the foothills of the Aravallis, was Delhi's third city built during Ghiyathuddin Tughlaq's four-year reign (1321-5).

Mehrauli Archaeological Park ①



**Chhatri outside
Jamali-Kamali**

Best known for the Qutb Minar, a UNESCO World Heritage Monument, Mehrauli was built over Rajput territories called Lal Kot and Qila Rai Pithora. In 1193, Qutbuddin Aibak, then a slave-general of Muhammad of Ghur (*see p48*), made it the centre of the Delhi Sultanate. By the 13th century the small village Mehrauli, had grown around the shrine of the Sufi saint, Qutb Sahib. Later, Mughal princes came here to hunt and some 19th-century British officials built weekend houses, attracted by the area's orchards, ponds and game. Many of Delhi's rich and famous now own sprawling retreats in the area.

Hauz-i-Shamsi reservoir was built in 1230 by Sultan Iltutmish (*see p48*) who is supposed to have been guided to this site by the Prophet in a dream.

Zafar Mahal is a palace named after the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar.

**Mehrauli
village**



★ **Jahaz Mahal**
Venue of the Phoolwalon ki Sair (a colourful flower procession), this square pleasure pavilion, built during the Lodi era (1451–1526), seems to float on the Hauz-i-Shamsi tank.

Jharna (waterfall) was so-called because after the monsoon water from the Hauz-i-Shamsi would flow over an embankment into a garden.

Bagichi Mosque

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Jahaz Mahal
- ★ Qutb Minar
- ★ Jamali-Kamali Mosque and Tomb

Madhi Masjid
Surrounded by bastions and a high wall, this fortress-like mosque, dating back to 1200, has a large open courtyard and a three-arched, heavily ornamented prayer hall.



Dargah Qutb Sahib

The 13th-century dargah of Sufi saint Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar and the nearby Moti Masjid ("Pearl Mosque"), attract many pilgrims.



Adham Khan's Tomb

The son of Emperor Akbar's wet nurse, Adham Khan murdered a political rival and was executed by the emperor for his crime. Akbar later built this large tomb for mother and son.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Delhi-Gurgaon Rd. ☐ daily
 Conservation Assistant's Office,
 (011) 2664 3856.
 ☞ Phoolwaion ki Sair (early Oct)

★ Qutb Minar

India's highest single tower. Qutb Minar (Arabic for pole or axis) marked the site of the first Muslim kingdom in North India, established in 1193 (see p94).

0 metres 250
 0 yards 250

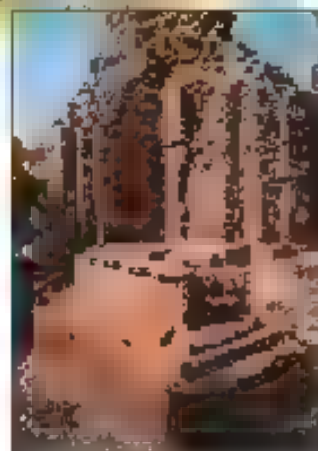
Diikusha Gardens

→ New Delhi



Rajon ki Baoli

This dramatic three-storeyed stepwell was also called Sukhi Baoli (dry well). Nearby is the five-storeyed Gandhak ki Baoli, named after its strong sulphur (gandhak) smell. These baolis once supplied fresh water to the area.



Balban's Tomb

The 13th-century tomb of Balban. Qutbuddin's successor, lies in a square rubble-built chamber.



★ Jamali Kamali Mosque and Tomb

The tomb of Jamali (the court poet during the late Lodi and early Mughal age) is inscribed with some of his verses. Its well-preserved interior has coloured tiles and richly decorated painted plasterwork. The second grave is unidentified but is widely believed to be that of his brother, Kamali.

Mehrauli: The Qutb Complex



Floral motif

The Qutb Minar towers over this historic area where Qutbuddin Aibak laid the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate (see p48). In 1193, he built the Quwwat ul Islam ('Might of Islam') Mosque and the Qutb Minar to announce the advent of the Muslim sultans. The mosque is a patchwork fusion of decorative Hindu panels, salvaged from razed temples around the site, and Islamic domes and arches. Later, Iltutmish, Alauddin Khilji and Feroze Shah Tughlaq added more structures, heralding a new architectural style.



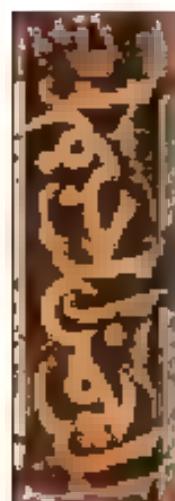
Qutb Minar

The five-storeyed Victory Tower started by Qutbuddin Aibak was completed by his successor Iltutmish.



Iron Pillar

This 4th-century pillar, originally made as a flagstaff in Vishnu's honour, is a tribute to ancient Indian metallurgy.



Carved Panels

Panels carved with inscriptions from the Koran embellish the gateway.

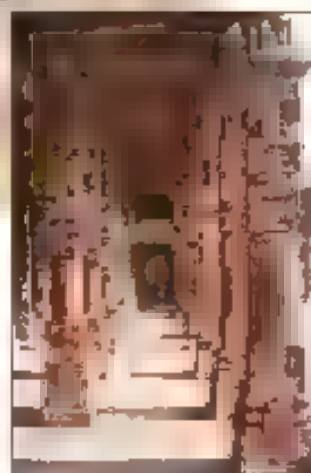


Alai Darwaza

This gateway to the complex, erected in 1311 by Alauddin Khilji, is one of the earliest buildings in India to employ the Islamic principles of arched construction.

Quwwat ul Islam Mosque

Hindu motifs, such as bells and garlands, are clearly visible on the pillars of this mosque.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

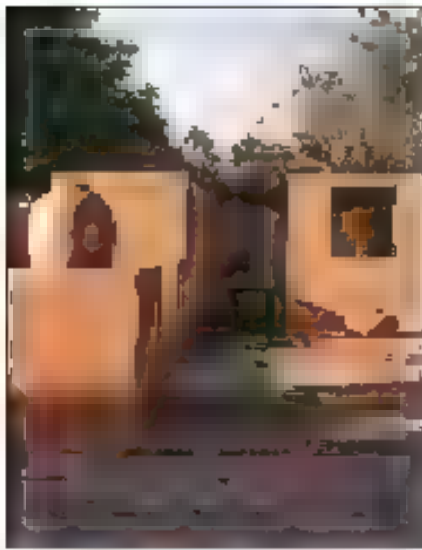
Mehrauli, Delhi-Gurgaon Rd

7am-6pm, 7-9.30pm daily



Qutb Festival (Oct/Nov)

← Entrance



Pots displayed at Sanskriti Museum

Sanskriti Museum ②

Anandgram, Mehrauli-Gurgaon Rd
Tel (011) 2650 1796 ☐ daily
● public hols

This unusual museum is set amid beautifully landscaped, spacious grounds. Exhibits are displayed both in the garden and in specially constructed rural huts. The collection itself is equally unusual in its devotion to objects of everyday use, that have been exquisitely crafted by unknown, rural artisans of Jam, whose personal collections gave birth to this museum. It has donated combs, nutcrackers, lamps, toys, foot-scrubbers and kitchenware, to demonstrate how even the most utilitarian objects can possess an innate beauty. Terracotta objects from all over India, in every shape and size, are also on display. They include striking pots made in traditional techniques unchanged for centuries, and towering figures of South Indian village deities.

Tughluqabad ③

Off Mehrauli-Badarpur Rd,
Monuments ☐ daily

The third of Delhi's early capitals (see p91), Tughluqabad is dominated by its spectacular fort, built by Ghiyasuddin Tughluq early in the 14th century. The fort was so sturdily constructed that its rubble-built walls, following the contours of the hill, survive intact all along the 7-km (4-mile) perimeter. Rising from the citadel to the right of the main entrance are the ruins of the Vijay Mangal ("Tower of Victory"). To the left is a rectangular area where arches are all that remain of a complex of palaces, houses and halls. Legend has it that when Ghiyasuddin tried to prevent the building of the *barah* at Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah* (see p82), the saint cursed him, saying that one day only jackals and the Gupar tribe would inhabit his capital.

A good view of the fort and of the smaller, adjoining Adilabad Fort, is possible from the walls. Adilabad was built by Muhammad bin Tughluq, who is believed to have killed his father Ghiyasuddin by

contriving to have a gateway collapse on him. Both are buried in **Ghiyasuddin's Tomb**, attached to the Tughluqabad Fort by a causeway that crossed the jammed waters of a lake. Constructed in red sandstone and inlaid with white marble, the tomb's sloping walls pioneered a style that was used in all subsequent Tughluq architecture.

Baha'i House of Worship ④

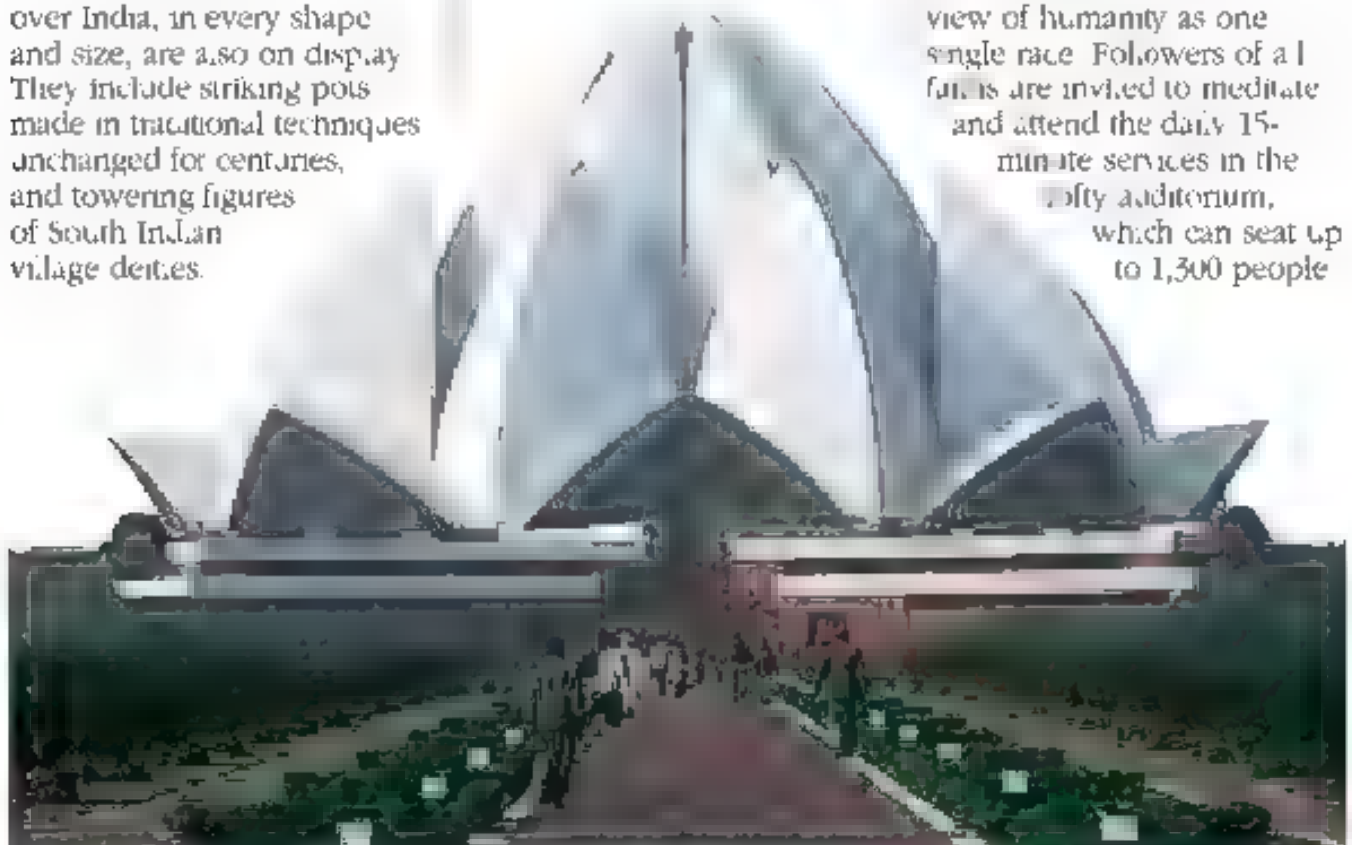
Bahapur, Kalkaji Tel (011) 2644 4029
☐ Tue-Sun ● public hols **Prayer services** 10am, noon, 3pm & 5pm

Delhi's most innovative modern structure, the Baha'i House of Worship is a world where science and order prevail. Designed by Iranian architect Fariborz Sahiba and completed in 1986, the arresting shape of its unfurling 27-petaled, white marble lotus has given it its more popular name, the Lotus Temple. The edifice is circled by nine pools and 92 ha (227 acres) of green lawns.

The Baha'i sect originated in Persia and is based on a view of humanity as one single race. Followers of all faiths are invited to meditate and attend the daily 15-minute services in the lofty auditorium, which can seat up to 1,300 people.



Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's Tomb



The lotus-domed Baha'i House of Worship, one of Delhi's most spectacular sights

Shopping & Entertainment in Delhi

The hallmark of shopping in Delhi is the bewildering variety of merchandise, markets and styles. Besides Connaught Place, almost every residential colony boasts a market. Old, established shops, bazaars and markets co-exist happily with glitzy, high-end boutiques and department stores and one can buy anything from seasonal fruits and traditional handicrafts to designer clothes and the latest imported electronic items. Delhi also has a rich and varied cultural life. The city's cultural calendar livens up between October and March when the season is in full swing. The number of events multiply as all major festivals of music, dance, theatre and cinema are held at this time of the year.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

New Delhi's main shopping centres are in and around Connaught Place and Janpath where the state emporiums and Cottage Industries offer an exciting and varied range of textiles, jewellery and souvenirs at fixed and reasonable prices. In the north is Chandni Chowk (see pp84-5), the traditional market, while to the south are Khan Market, Sundar Nagar and Santushti, the old urban villages of Hauz Khas, Shahpur Jat and Mehrauli, and Dilli Haat, a crafts bazaar on Ambhindo Marg. The five-star hotels also have convenient shopping arcades selling carefully selected goods.

ANTIQUES, JEWELLERY AND SILVER

Genuine antiques are rare to come by and, in any case, cannot be taken out of the country unless certified by the ASI (see p759). However, the **Crafts Museum Shop**, hotel boutiques and Sundar Nagar market stock excellent reproductions of miniature paintings, woodcarvings and bronzes made by artisans today. Superb pieces of traditional jewellery, including *kundan* and *meenakari* are available at Sundar Nagar market, especially at **Bharany's**. Silver jewellery, both traditional and modern, can be found in the galleries of Dariba Kalan, in Chandni Chowk and Sundar Nagar. **Ravissant** and **Cooke & Kelvy** are the best places for contemporary silverware.

TEXTILES, SHAWLS AND CARPETS

Traditional textiles are available in most of the better shops and emporiums, particularly **Cottage Industries** on Janpath. A wide and exclusive selection of personal care products are on offer at **Forest Essentials** in Defence Colony. **The Shop**, **Anokhi** and **FabIndia** are the best places for good quality ready-made garments, linen and light cotton quilts. Lodi Colony market has several boutiques offering eclectic Indian designer-wear, including the stylish **Abraham & Thakore**. **Shyam Ahuja** sells linen, textiles and *dhurries*, while **The Carpet Cellar** is an excellent outlet for Afghan and Kashmiri carpets and pashmina shawls.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

The Crafts Museum Shop, **Tulsi Kamala** and Dilli Haat have a wide selection of Indian handicrafts and other gift items, while **Tibet House** has woollen shawls, jackets, *thangkas* and carpets. For quality leather goods such as handmade shoes and jackets the many Chinese-owned outlets in Connaught Place, set the standards for comfort and durability. For trendier goods there is **Da Milano**.

In Chandni Chowk's Dariba Kalan is **Gulab Singh Johari Mal**, a marvelous old-fashioned shop where one can test Indian perfume (*attar*) from cut-glass bottles. Their soaps are also worth buying. Herbal cosmetics, incense

sticks, perfumed candles and aromatherapy oils and lotions are available in many of the larger stores, including **Good Earth**, which also stocks towels, bathrobes and massage mats. Cosmetics by Vama Ayurveda, Biotique and Shahnaz Herbal are found at most chemists.

Spices and fresh seasonal fruit are found at INA Market (see p86) and Indian tea is sold in Kaka Nagar Market (near the Oberoi Hotel on Zakir Hussain Marg), Khan Market and at **Mittal Tea House** in Lodi Colony market.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDES, TICKETS AND VENUES

All newspapers list the day's entertainment on their engagements page. Other useful sources of information on events, restaurants, sports and related activities are the weekly *Delhi Diary* and the monthly magazine, *First City*.

At several venues in the city, such as the **India International Centre**, entry is free. At others, such as the **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)**, it is by invitation only. Tickets for selected music and dance festivals and theatre, however, are advertised and sold at certain bookshops or at the box office.

Most of Delhi's cultural activities are clustered around Mandi House (see p75). The largest auditorium, **Kamani** on Copernicus Marg, hosts concerts, plays and classical music and dance performances throughout the year. During the season music and dance events are also held at FICCI Auditorium, on the roundabout, **Triveni Kala Sangam** on Tansen Marg, and at Azad Bhavan, the main venue for performances organized by the state-run ICCR. Excellent plays, in both Hindi and English, are held at the open air auditorium of the **National School of Drama**, the main repertory company at Bhawapur House, and at the **Shri Ram Centre** nearby. Colourful folk dances from all over India, organized by the

Trade Fair Authority of India, are held during the annual Trade India Fair in November, at Pragati Maidan, the huge exhibition grounds on Mathura Road.

Both the **India Habitat Centre** and the **India International Centre**, on Lodi Road, organize a variety of events that include films, plays, concerts, exhibitions, lectures and discussions. The mega **Siri Fort Complex**, in south Delhi, is the venue for most prestigious events.

Popular Indian and foreign films are screened at the many cinema halls dotted all over the city. Among the better equipped halls are **PVR Anupam** in Saket and **PVR Priya** in Vasant Vihar.

PERFORMING ARTS

Delhi is the best place to experience the range and richness of classical dance and music. Performances by the best exponents of the major styles of Odissi, Kathak, Bharat Natyam and Kuchipudi take place during the high season, between October and March. The same is true of concerts of Hindustani and Carnatic classical music. India's vibrant folk dance and music traditions, such as the devotional music of the Sufis, dance-dramas from Kerala, puppet shows from Rajasthan and Karnataka, can also be seen at various venues. Check newspapers for details on location and tickets.

EXHIBITIONS

Major exhibitions are held at the **National Museum**, **National Gallery of Modern Art**, **Art Heritage** and the **Crafts Museum**. These include special collections of rare sculpture and paintings from museums all over India, as well as from abroad. Recent years have seen exhibitions of Picasso's paintings, the Nizam of Hyderabad's fabulous jewels and Mughal paintings from Queen Elizabeth II's private collection.

Regular exhibitions of contemporary art and craft, photography and graphics are also held in the many art galleries around Mandi House.

DIRECTORY

ANTIQUES, JEWELLERY AND SILVER

Bharany's
Sundar Nagar Market
Tel (011) 2435 8528

Cooke & Kely
Janpath
Tel (011) 2372 1081

Crafts Museum Shop
Pragati Maidan
Tel (011) 2337 1269

Ravissant
Oberoi Hotel
Tel (011) 2436 3030

TEXTILES, SHAWLS AND CARPETS

Abraham & Thakore
31 Lodi Colony Main Mkt.
Tel (011) 2460 3455

Anokhi
Khan Market
Tel (011) 2460 3423

The Carpet Cellar
1 Anand Lok
Tel (011) 2626 1777

Cottage Industries
Janpath
Tel (011) 2332 0439

FabIndia
Greater Kailash, N-Block Market
Tel (011) 2621 2183

Forest Essentials
46-B, Khan Market
Tel (011) 4175 7057

The Shop
Connaught Place
Tel (011) 2374 6050

Shyam Ahuja
Santusht
Tel (011) 2467 0112

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Da Milano
Connaught Place
Tel (011) 2341 5490

Good Earth
Santusht, Mehrauli
Tel (011) 2685 1757

Gulab Singh Johri Mal
Dariba Kalan, Chandni Chowk
Tel (011) 2327 1345

Kamala
Rajiv Gandhi Handicrafts Bhavan, Baba Khark Singh Marg
Tel (011) 2374 3322

Mittal Tea House
B-A, Lodi Colony Mkt
Tel (011) 2461 5709

Tibet House
Lodi Rd
Tel (011) 2461 1515

Tulsi
Santusht
Tel (011) 2687 0339

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

India Habitat Centre
Lodi Rd
Tel (011) 2468 2222

India International Centre
40, Lodi Estate, Max Mueller Marg
Tel (011) 2461 9431

Indian Council for Cultural Relations
Azad Bhavan, IP Estate
Tel (011) 2337 9309

Kamani Auditorium
Copernicus Marg
Tel (011) 2338 8084

National School of Drama
Bhawalpur House
Tel (011) 2338 9402

PVR Anupam
Community Centre, Saket
Tel (011) 2686 5999

PVR Priya
Basant Lok, Vasant Vihar
Tel (011) 2614 0048

Shri Ram Centre
Satdar Hashmi Marg
Tel (011) 2371 4307

Siri Fort Complex
Asian Village Complex
Tel (011) 2649 3370

Trade Fair Authority of India
Pragati Maidan
Tel (011) 2337 1540

Triveni Kala Sangam
205, Tansen Marg
Tel (011) 2371 8833

EXHIBITIONS

Art Heritage
Triveni Kala Sangam
Tel (011) 2371 9470

National Gallery of Modern Art
Jaipur House, India Gate
Tel (011) 2338 2835

National Museum
Janpath
Tel (011) 2301 9272

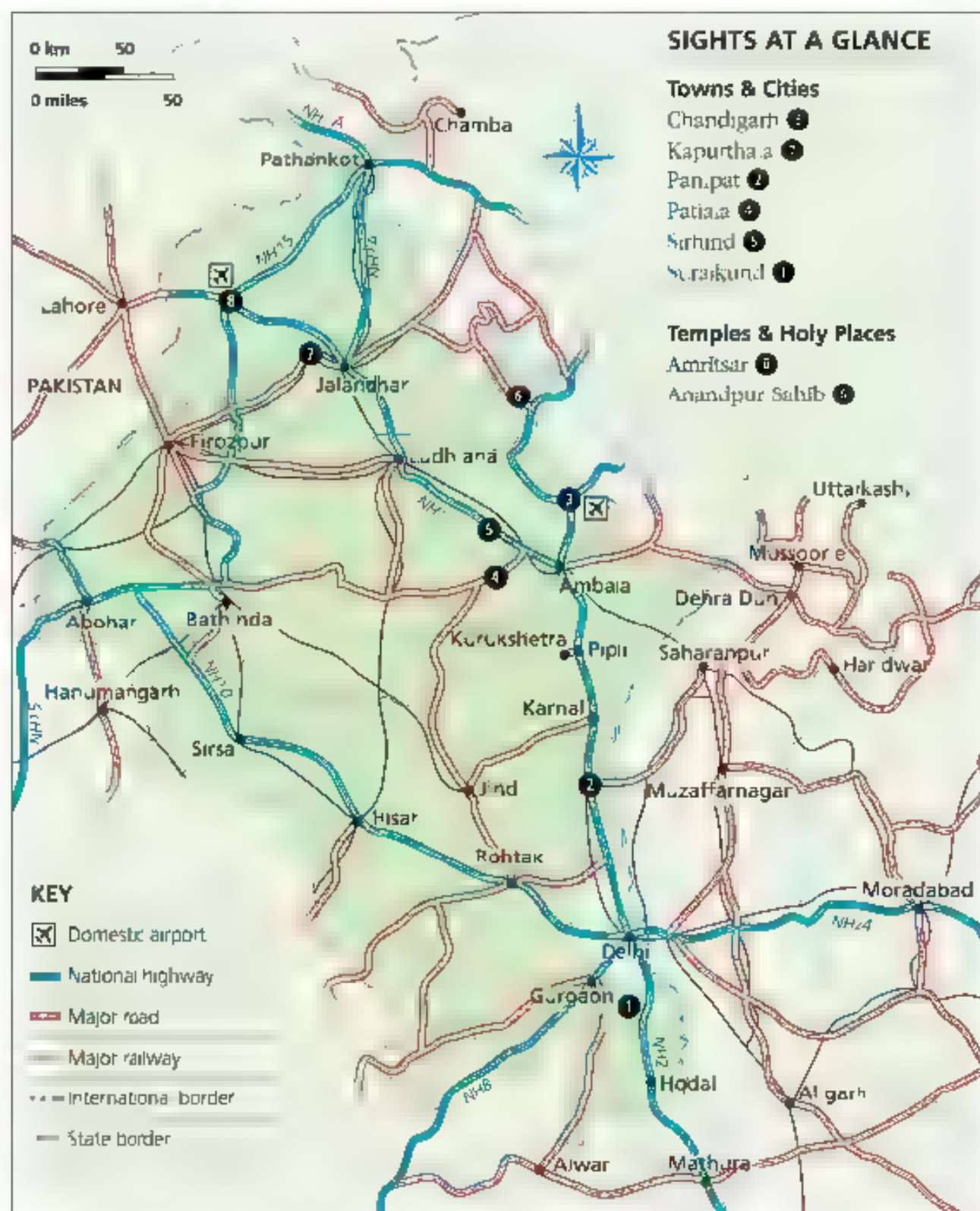


HARYANA & PUNJAB

Haryana and Punjab cover the vast plains that stretch between the River Indus and the Gangetic belt. Fertile soil and the improved agricultural techniques of the 1960s Green Revolution (see p62), have made this region the granary of India, producing more than half the wheat, rice and millet grown in the country. Industrial development followed the success of the Green Revolution, and the two states now also have flourishing dairy and wool-based industries. Most visitors pass only briefly through Haryana and Punjab, usually on their way to



Himachal Pradesh taking in en route the states' two best known attractions. Chandigarh, the planned city built by the famous architect Le Corbusier, which is the shared capital of Haryana and Punjab, and the Golden Temple at Amritsar, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs. For those who care to explore further, there are the former princely states of Patiala and Kapurthala, with their distinctive architecture, and the holy *dargahs* at Panipat and Sirhind. Above all, the warmth and hospitality of the people is this area's special attraction.





Sufi saint Qalandar Shah's dargah at Panipat, built in the 14th century

Surajkund ①

Faridabad district 21 km (13 miles) S of Delhi. 🚗 🏠 Haryana Tourism, Chandeliok Building, 36, Janpath, New Delhi, (011) 2332 4910 📅 Surajkund Crafts Mela (Feb.)

This historic reservoir built between the 8th and 11th centuries by King Surajpal of the Rajput Tomar dynasty, is today a popular picnic spot. The original embankment of stone terraces surrounding the tank, specially built to trap rain-water still exists. Nearby, an artificial lake is well-equipped with boating facilities. The area comes alive in the first two weeks of February, when an excellent crafts *mela* is held here, with artisans from all over India selling their wares in a specially created village. Puppets from Rajasthan, bell-metal beasts from Orissa and mirrorwork from Gujarat are displayed alongside a variety of food stalls, while musicians and folk dancers weave through the crowds, giving the fair a joyous, carnival air.



Folk singers performing at the Surajkund Crafts Mela

history to the epic age. The older part of the town has some interesting *bavelis*, and a 14th-century tomb-shrine dedicated to the Sufi saint Qalandar Shah. The new town is a busy, bustling settlement strung along National Highway 1, which follows the route of the historic Grand Trunk Road (see p179). Today, Panipat is well-known for its furnishing fabrics and carpets.

Environs
Karnal, 34 km (21 miles) north of Panipat, lies at the heart of a rich pastoral region and is an important agricultural and cattle breeding centre. The

National Dairy Research Institute is situated here some 90 km (56 miles) north of Panipat; the pilgrim town of **Kurukshetra** is dotted with temples and marks the mythical site of the epic battle between the Pandavas and Kauravas, the heroes of the *Mahabharata* (see p26).



Ritual prayers at the sacred temple tank at Kurukshetra

Panipat ①

Panipat district 85 km (53 miles) N of Delhi. 🚗 🏠 📅 Urs of Qalandar Shah (Jan/Feb.)

The site of three decisive battles that changed the course of Indian history including one which led to the founding of the Mughal Empire (see pp50–51), in 1526, Panipat is situated on a flat, dusty plain and traces its

Chandigarh ③

Chandigarh district 238 km (148 miles) N of Delhi. 🚗 750,000. 📏 11 km (7 miles) S of city centre. 🚗 🏠 📅 Interstate Bus Terminal, Sector 17, (0172) 272 1173 📅 Rose Festival (Feb.)

The state capital of both Haryana and Punjab, Chandigarh was built in the early 1950s by the internationally renowned architect Le Corbusier. It is considered the first modern city of post-Independent India and is laid out on a grid, divided evenly into 57 blocks or sectors.

Le Corbusier conceived the city along the lines of a modular man, with the **Capitol Complex**, which includes the Secretariat, Assembly and High Court buildings, as its "head". The main shopping area, **Sector 17**, is the "heart" of Le Corbusier's plan and is set around a central plaza and fountain, lined with shops indicating that Chandigarh's affluent citizens are extremely fond of good food and clothes. Adjoining this sector is a gently undulating stretch of green, the city's "lungs", with an enormous **Rose Garden** that is at its best in February. Over a 1,000 varieties of colourful roses bloom amidst winding paths, fountains and sprawling, beautifully tended lawns.

The city's extensive residential sectors make up its "torso" with neat houses and gardens showing impressive evidence of the residents' green fingers. Each road is lined with a different species of flowering tree – laburnum, jacaranda, *gulmohar* – adding colour to the cityscape.

Chandigarh's **Museum and Art Gallery** in Sector 10 houses one of the country's finest collections of Gandharan sculpture (see p43) and miniature paintings. Among the best exhibits are a serene 6th-century Standing Bodhisattva in the Gandharan style, and a rare 11th-century statue of Vishnu holding a conch shell from Kashmir. The miniatures section has a comprehensive selection of Pahari paintings (see p121).



Chandigarh's Capitol Complex, typical of Le Corbusier's functional style

from the Kangra, Basohli and Guler schools, while modern art includes mountainscapes by the Russian painter Nicholas Roerich (see p128)

Lying opposite the Capitol Complex the **Rock Garden** is one of the city's most popular tourist spots. Spread over 16 ha (4 acres) in Sector 1, it was created in the 1970s by an ex-road inspector, Nek Chand and is a refreshing contrast to Le Corbusier's severely symmetrical cityscape. The area encloses a unique "kingdom", a labyrinth with wells, waterfalls and caves, and semed ranks of sculptures crafted from such unlikely material as discarded neon lights, fuse switches, broken crockery and glass.

A short distance away is the man-made **Sukhna Lake**, where a pleasant promenade attracts joggers and walkers.

This is one of Chandigarh's prettiest areas, especially in the evenings, when visitors can enjoy dramatic sunsets and views of the twinkling lights of the nearby hill station, Kasauli (see p113)

Museum and Art Gallery
Tel (0172) 274 2501 ☐ Tue-Sun 5

Environs

The **Pinjore Gardens**, lying 22 km (14 miles) north of Chandigarh, were designed in the 17th century by Fida Khan, foster brother of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. They are terraced in the Mughal style and dotted with domed pavilions, fountains and water chutes. **Sanghol**, 40 km (25 miles) west of Chandigarh has an excavated site of a 2nd-century Buddhist stupa with an interesting museum of Kushana sculpture



Ceramic figures at Nek Chand's Rock Garden

LE CORBUSIER'S CITY

In 1950, India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, commissioned the French-Swiss architect Charles Edouard Jeanneret ("Le Corbusier"), to create a new capital for Punjab, as the old capital, Lahore, had become a part of Pakistan after Independence in 1947. The result was a city of concrete blocks and straight arterial roads, projecting Le Corbusier's philosophy of functional efficiency free of unnecessary ornamentation such as domes and arches. Without any crowded bazaars, Chandigarh lacks the typical bustle and vitality of older Indian towns.

and some of Le Corbusier's buildings now look weather-beaten. Yet it remains the country's cleanest and most orderly city and this, perhaps, is Le Corbusier's lasting legacy

FESTIVALS OF HARYANA & PUNJAB

Qalandar Shah's Urs

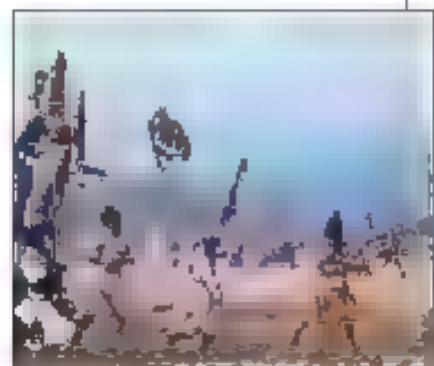
(Jan/Feb), Panipat. This festival honours the Sufi saint Qalandar Shah with qawwali singing and a colourful fair at his shrine

Surajkund Crafts Mela

(1-15 Feb), Surajkund. Craftsmen from all over the country congregate with a fine selection of their wares, from hand-woven fabrics to folk toys.

Rose Festival (Feb)

Chandigarh. The city's gigantic Rose Garden is at its best with flower shows and a weekend carnival of dance and music



Skilled swordsmanship at the Holi Mohalla festivities

Holi Mohalla (Mar/Apr)

Anantpur Sahib. The highlight of this fair held the day after Holi, is a spectacular display of fencing and tent pegging, as the Nihang Sikhs show off their legendary martial and equestrian skills

Baisakhi (14 Apr)

Gala processions, dancing and feasting take place all over Punjab to mark the spring equinox and the beginning of the harvest. Lively *melas* are held at all the major gurdwaras

Guru Parab (Nov)

Celebrated across Punjab on the first full moon night after Diwali (see p37), the birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism is particularly spectacular at the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Thousands of lamps illuminate the temple every night from Diwali onwards



The "open hand", Chandigarh's emblem



The splendid Durbar Hall at the Qila Mubarak, Patiala

Patiala 4

Patiala district 63 km (39 miles) SW of Chandigarh. 269,000 Basant (Feb.) Mon–Sat

Patiala, situated between the Satluj and Ghaggar rivers, was formerly a princely state ruled by a string of flamboyant rulers in the 19th century who made its name a byword for everything larger than life. Thus, the "Patiala Peg" is a whopping measure of whisky, the Patiala *salwar* three times the width of an ordinary one, and the gargantuan palace, to quote an overawed English visitor, "makes Versailles look like a cottage". Its rulers were also enthusiastic patrons of the arts, architecture and sports, and the city's gracious ambience and its rich folk crafts owe a great deal to their generous encouragement.

The present city has grown around the **Qila Mubarak**, a fort built in 1763. Its oldest part, Qila Anaroon, though derelict, has traces of fine wall paintings. The **Durbar Hall**, added later, stands to the right of the entrance gates and is now a museum with a beautifully ornamented ceiling and well-preserved murals. Inside it, is a spectacular display of cannons and arms including the sword of the Persian ruler Nadir Shah (see p52) who invaded India in 1739. The lively bazaar around the fort offers the city's

famous hand-crafted leather shoes (*jutties*), tasselled silken braids (*pirandis*) and bright y embroidered *phulkari* fabric.

The enormous **Old Moti Bagh Palace**, completed in the early years of the 20th century in the Indo-Saracenic style, has as many as 15 dining halls. Counted as one of the largest residences in Asia, it is set amidst terraced gardens and water channels,



A typical *phulkari* motif

inspired by Mughal gardens. The terraces lead to the Sheesh Mahal, where the **Art Gallery** displays miniature paintings, rare manuscripts, objets d'art, and hunting trophies from the former royal collection.

Pride of place is given to a collection of medals, some awarded to, and some collected by, the former rulers. The Art Gallery overlooks a large tank flanked by two towers, with a rope suspension bridge to connect them. The main palace has



Hand-embroidered *jutties* on sale in Patiala's bazaar

now been given over to the National Institute of Sports and the large pleasure pool where the maharaja once watched dancing girls cavorting has been converted into a wrestling pit.

In the north of the city are the **Baradari Gardens**, laid out in the late 19th century by Prince Rajinder Singh, an avid horticulturist who also created a rock garden and fern house here. The splendid **Kali Temple**, which is located within the walled city, has a large marble image of Kali brought here all the way from Makrana in Rajasthan.

Durbar Hall Museum

Tue–Sun. with permission

Old Moti Bagh Palace

Tue–Sun

Sirhind 5

Fatehgarh Sahib district 55 km (34 miles) W of Chandigarh. 37,000 Punjab Tourism, (01763, 22 9170. Urs at Rauza Sharif (Aug), Shaheedi Jor Mela (Dec)

The town of Sirhind was one of the most important settlements in North India between the 16th and 18th centuries. Once the capital of the Patnanwar Sultans, the ruins of whose massive fort can still be seen, Sirhind was also a favourite halting place for the Mughal emperors on their annual journeys to Kashmir. In the 11th century, Mahmud of Ghazni (see p48) expanded his empire up to this area, thus giving the town its name, which in Persian means "Frontier of India".

The Mughals constructed several beautiful buildings here, in the area now called **Aam Khas Bagh**, which today is a tourist complex run by the government. Especially interesting is the **Royal Hamam**, a complex structure for hot and cold baths, that uses water drawn from wells nearby through an intricate system of hand pulleys. Close to the baths are the ruins of Shah Jahan's double-storeyed palace, the **Daulat Mahal**, and the better preserved **Sheesh Mahal**,



Rauza Sharif Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi's dargah in Sirhind

whose walls still have traces of the original friework and decorative plaster.

To the north of Aam Khas Bagh is the white **Fatehgarh Sahib Gurdwara** standing in the midst of bright yellow mustard fields, which bloom in January. It was built to honour the memory of the martyred sons of the tenth Sikh guru, Gobind Singh, who were walled in alive at this spot by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1705 for refusing to convert to Islam.

Adjacent to the gurdwara is an important pilgrimage site for Muslims, the tomb-shrine of the Sufi saint and theologian, Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi, who is also known as Mujaddid-al-Sani ("The Reformer of the Millennium"). This magnificent octagonal structure, with its dome covered in glazed blue tiles, was built in the 16th century. Known as the **Rauza Sharif**, it is considered as holy as the

Dargah Sharif in Ajmer (see p326). Standing close to it is a striking tomb from the same period, the **Mausoleum of Mir Miran**, son-in-law of one of the Lodi kings. Also of interest is the **Salavat Beg Haveli**, a fascinating and exceptionally well-preserved example of a large Mughal-era house.

Aam Khas Bagh
 Tue-Sun

Anandpur Sahib 6

Roopnagar district, 73 km (45 miles) N of Chandigarh. 31,000
 Hola Mohalla (Mar-Apr).

Guarded by the Shivalik Hills and a ring of imposing forts, Anandpur Sahib is a complex of historic Sikh gurdwaras. It was here that

the severed head of the ninth guru, Tegh Bahadur, was brought to be cremated, a site now marked by the **Sisganj Sahib Gurdwara**.

The gurdwara also marks the place where the tenth and last guru, Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa or "Army of the Pure" in 1699, along with five volunteers to help him defend the faith. The **Kesgarh Sahib Gurdwara**, which was built to commemorate this event, is regarded as one of the four *takhts* or principal seats of the Sikh religion – the others are at Amritsar (see p104).

Nanded in Maharashtra and Patna (see p212) in Bihar. A week-long celebration was held here in April 1999, to mark the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa.

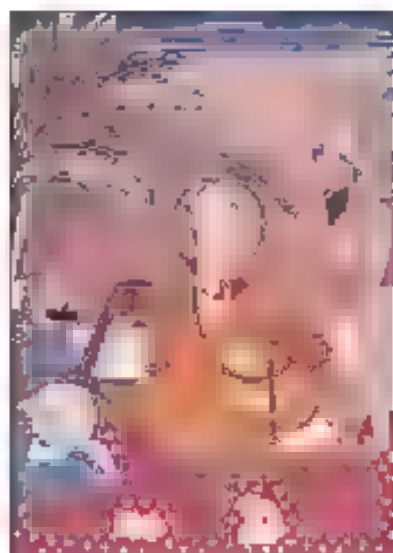
A series of forts surround Anandpur Sahib on all sides – **Lohagarh Fort** was used as the armoury of the Khalsa army.



A Nihang Sikh in full regalia

Fatehgarh Fort guarded the route between Delhi and Lahore and **Taragarh Fort** protected it from attacks by the hill states lying to the north.

Anandpur Sahib comes to life every year during the Hola Mohalla festival (see p101) when thousands of devotees congregate here to watch the blue-robed Nihang Sikhs, descendants of the guru's personal guards, display their formidable martial and equestrian skills.



A mid-19th-century painting of Guru Nanak with his disciples

SIKHISM

With their characteristic turbans and full beards, the Sikhs are easy to identify. The Sikh religion is a reformist faith, founded by Guru Nanak in the 15th century. Strongly opposed to idol worship, rituals and the caste system, it believes in a formless God. Sikhism is also called the Gurmat, meaning "the Guru's Doctrine" and Sikh temples are known as gurdwaras, literally "doors to the guru". Nanak, the first of a series of ten gurus, chose his successor from among his most devout disciples. Gobind Singh (1666–1708), the tenth and last guru, reorganized the community in 1699 as a military order, the Khalsa, to combat religious persecution by the Mughals. He gave the Sikh community a distinctive religious identity, and from then onwards they were meant to wear the Khalsa's five symbols: *kes* (long hair), *kachha* (underwear), *kirpan* (small sword), *kangha* (comb) and *kara* (bracelet). Their holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is kept in the Golden Temple (see pp106–107).



Detail of a marble sculpture, Elysée Palace, Kapurthala

Kapurthala ⑦

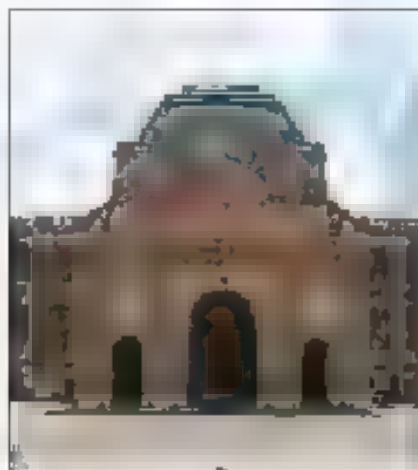
Kapurthala district 165 km (103 miles) NW of Chandigarh 🚗 🚆

This former princely state owes its extraordinary architectural heritage to the eccentric Maharaja Jagatjit Singh, who created amidst the rich agricultural fields of Punjab a corner that will be forever France. In 1906, this passionate Francophile, commissioned a French architect to build him a palace modelled on Versailles, with elements of Fontainebleau and the Louvre added on. This amazing structure which he grandly named the Elysée Palace (now the **Jagatjit Palace**) sits amidst gardens embellished with stone statuary and fountains, and is surrounded by villas built for his officials, modelled on those that were in vogue in the suburbs of Paris in the late 19th century. The palace is now a school but the building with its ornate interiors and Renaissance-style painted ceilings, is open to public.

After this palace was built, the maharaja went through a Spanish phase. This found expression in the **Buena Vista Hunting Lodge**. Located on the outskirts of the town, it is occupied by his descendants. Another impressive sight is the town's **Moorish Mosque**. Inspired by the grand Qutubiya Mosque in Marrakesh, this was designed by yet another French architect employed by Jagatjit Singh. Its inner dome has been beautifully painted by Punjabi artists.

🏰 Jagatjit Palace

🕒 Tue–Sun 🚶 🚗



The Jagatjit Palace at Kapurthala, modelled on Versailles in France

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH



Maharaja Ranjit Singh
(c. 1790–1839)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was one of North India's most remarkable rulers. By persuading rival Sikh chieftains to unite, he established the first Sikh kingdom of the Punjab. A military genius, his strong army kept both the British and ambitious Afghan invaders at bay, making Punjab a prosperous centre of trade and industry.

A devout Sikh who did much to

embellish the Golden Temple, the one-eyed Ranjit Singh was an enlightened ruler who liked to say "God intended me to look at all religions with one eye". A decade after his death, the British annexed the Punjab and seized his fabulous treasures, including the famous Kohinoor diamond.

Amritsar ⑤

Amritsar district 217 km (135 miles) NW of Chandigarh 🚗 🚆 1,000,000

🏨 **Palace Hotel** opp railway station, (0183) 240 2452 📏 12 km (8 miles) NW of city centre 🚶 🚗

🏨 **Guru Parab (Nov)**

Founded in 1577 by the fourth Sikh guru, Ram Das, Amritsar was built on a site donated by the Mughal emperor Akbar. Located in the heart of the city is the **Golden Temple** (see pp106–107), the Sikh community's holiest shrine, surrounded by a maze of lanes and 18 fortified gateways. In 1984, parts of the Golden Temple were badly damaged during an army operation to flush out extremists holed up inside, who were demanding a separate Sikh homeland. It has now been repaired and carefully restored to its original glory.

The temple complex is actually a city within a city, and the main entrance is through its northern gateway known as the **Darshani Darwaza**, which also houses the **Central Sikh Museum**. On display are paintings, coins, manuscripts and arms, that combine to create a vivid picture of Sikh history. Steps lead down to the **Parikrama** (marble path-way) which encircles the **Amrit Sarovar** ("Pool of Nectar", after which the town is named), and the main shrine, the gilded-domed **Hari Mandir** ("Temple of God"). Several holy and historic sites line the Parikrama, among them a tree shrine called the **Dukh Bhanjani Ber**, said to have miraculous powers for healing diseases, and the **Athsath Tirath** which represents 68 of the holiest Hindu pilgrim shrines.

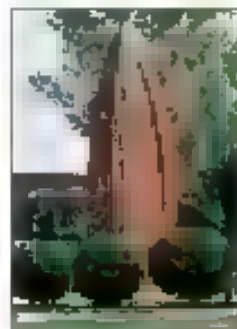
The Parikrama continues on to the Akal Takht, the seat of the Sikh religious order. Its construction began in 1589 and was completed in 1601 by the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, when he began organizing the Sikh community into a political entity. The upper floors were built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.



View of the Golden Temple complex, with the central shrine and main entrance

As part of the daily ritual, the Holy Book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is carried out of the Akal Takht to the Har Mandir at daybreak. The head priest then opens it for the *vaq*, the message for the day. From dawn till late at night the temple echoes with the music of *rags* musicians employed by the temple trust to sing verses from the Holy Book. Every visitor entering the Har Mandir (including non-Sikhs) is given a dollop of sweet *prasad* (holy offering) and no visit is considered truly complete without a meal at the **Guru ka Langar**—a free kitchen where all visitors are fed a simple meal of *dal-roti* (lentil curry and bread). Run by volunteers, this kitchen can feed 10,000 people a day. Its vast hall, which can seat 3,000 people at a time, serves as a symbol of the caste-free egalitarian society that the Sikh gurus strove to create. The notion of *kar-seva* (voluntary manual labour for a cause) is an important part of the Sikh order. Tasks such as sweeping the temple precincts, cooking at the *langar* or looking after the pilgrims' shoes, are enthusiastically performed by volunteers. The final evening prayers are over by 9.45pm, when the Holy Book is reverently closed and carried in a silver palanquin

back to the Akal Takht. The floors of the temple are then washed with milk and water before the doors of the Darshan Deorh are closed. A few other shrines are found just outside the Temple complex. These include a



Memorial, Jallianwala Bagh

shrine dedicated to Guru Hargobind Singh, as well as the nine-storeyed **Baba Atal Tower** which marks the spot where Atal Rai, the son of Hargobind attained martyrdom. The 16th-century **Durgiana Temple**, visited by Hindus, is dedicated to Durga. It lies 2 km (1.3 miles) northeast of the Golden Temple.

Jallianwala Bagh, also a short distance from the Golden Temple, is the site of an infamous massacre that took place in 1919. Hundreds of unarmed demonstrators were gunned down in this enclosed garden on the orders

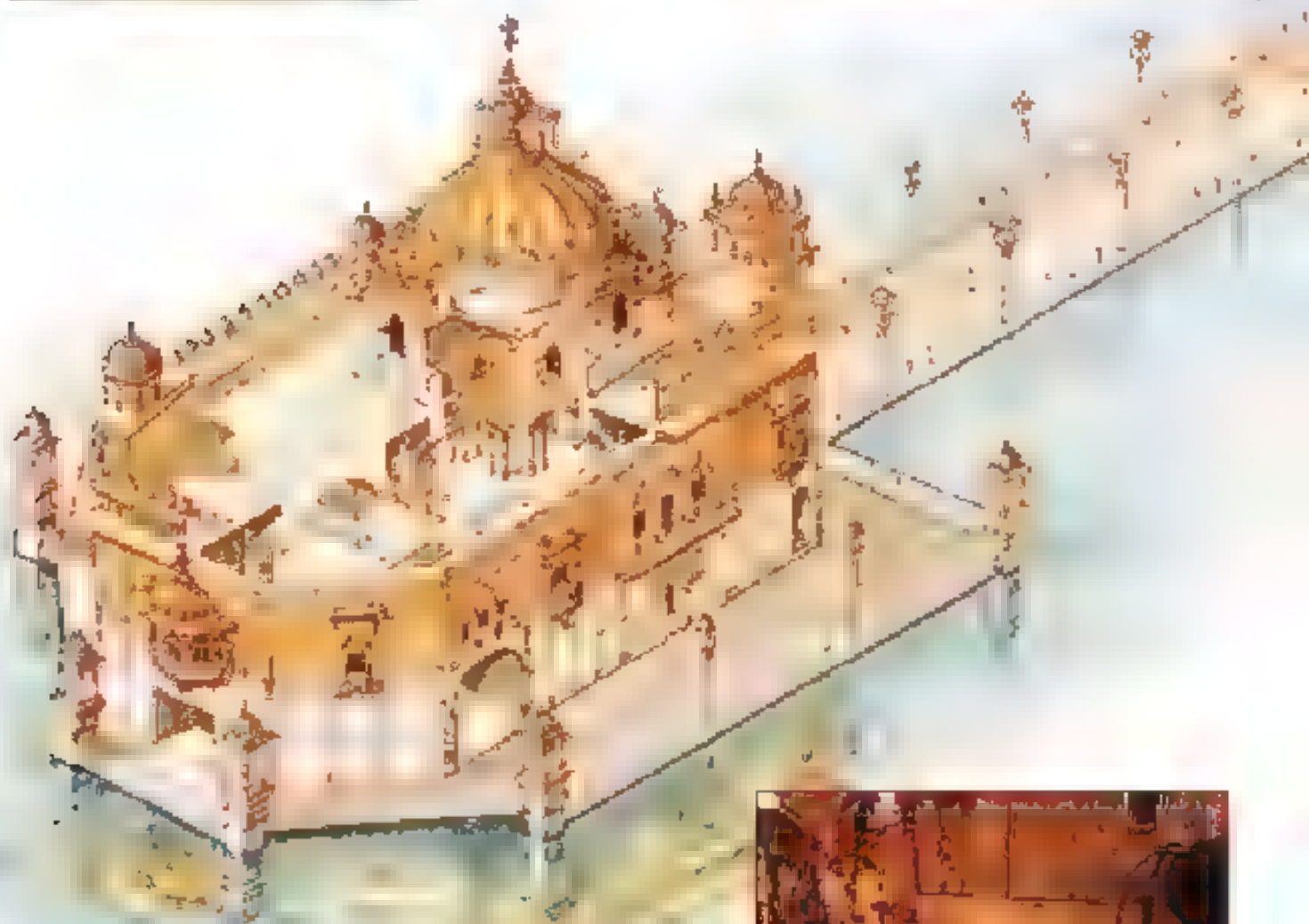
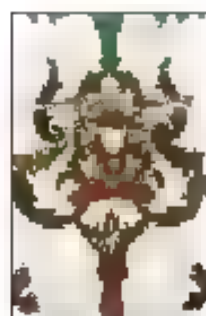
of General Reginald Dyer, who arrived heading a platoon of infantry from Jalandhar. It was an event which helped hasten the end of British rule in India. A memorial to those killed stands at the east end

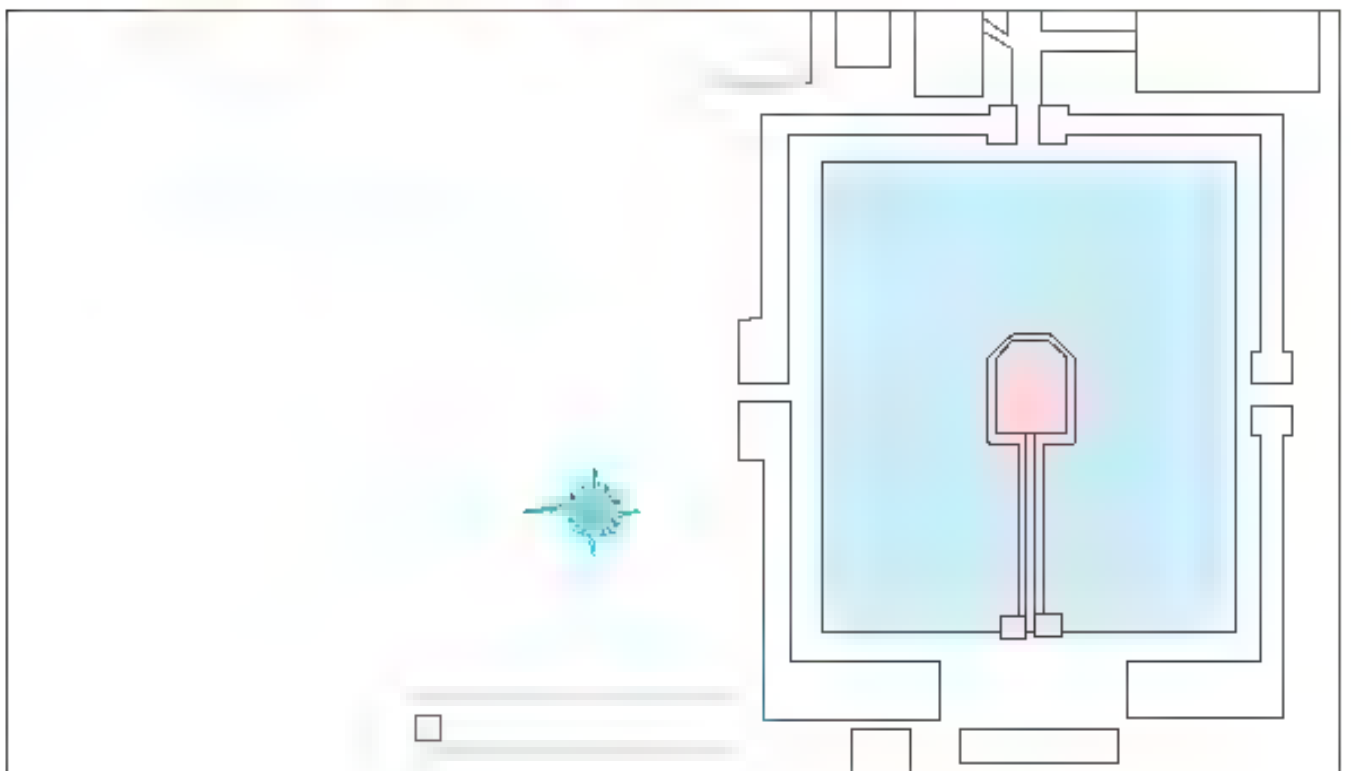
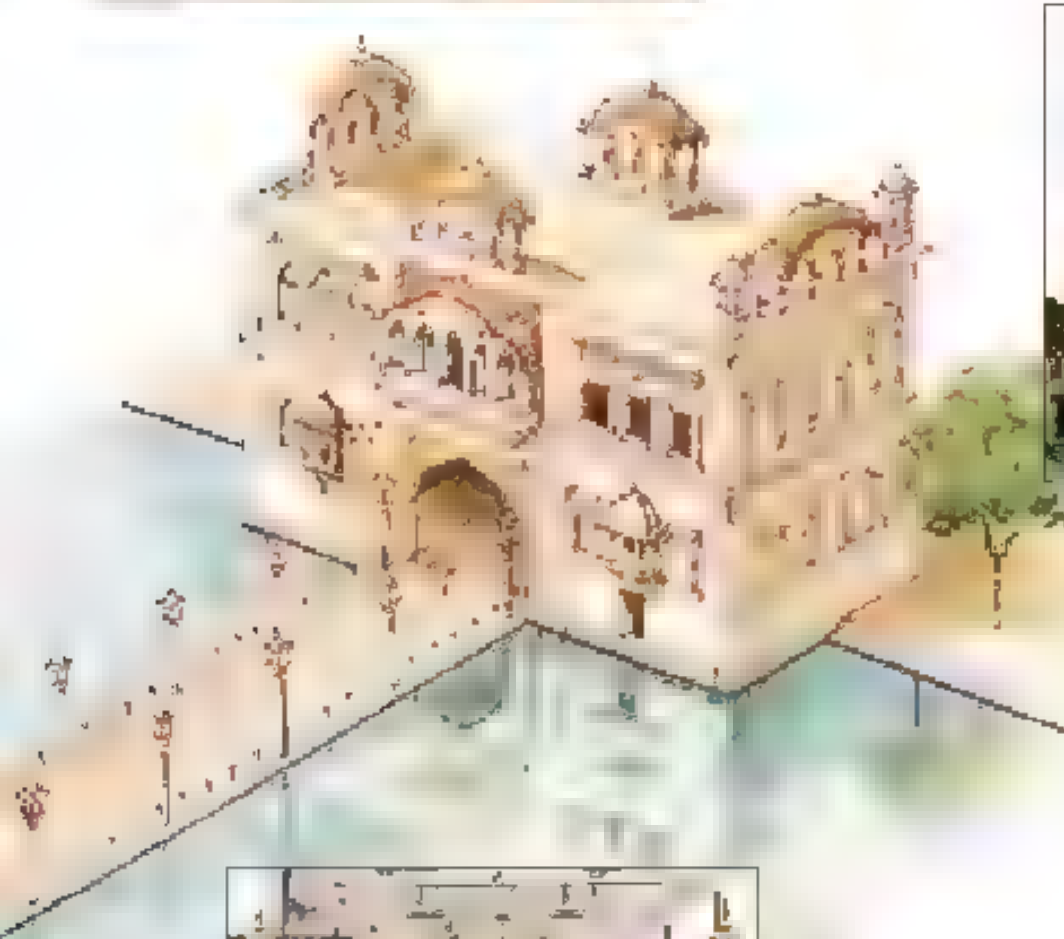
Environs

The last checkpoint on the Indian border is at **Wagah**, just 9 km (6 miles) from Amritsar, separated from Attan in Pakistan by a thin road. Each evening, as buglers sound the last post two splendidly uniformed guards on either side of the border goose step across to the flagpoles to lower their respective national flags. Their steps are matched so perfectly that it is like watching a mirror image of the same exercise. The ceremony, which attracts crowds of spectators on both sides, is a poignant reminder of the Partition of 1947 (see p56), when Punjab was divided between two nations.



Ceremonial guards accompanying the Holy Book outside the Akal Takht

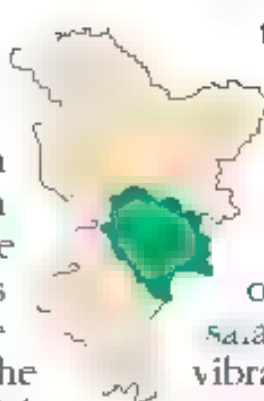






HIMACHAL PRADESH

Himachal, the "Abode of Snow" covers over 56,000 sq km (21,622 sq miles) of the Western Himalayas. The state's terrain rises from the foothills of the Shivaliks bordering the plains of Punjab, and extends to the trans-Himalayan heights of the Zaskar Range bordering Ladakh and Tibet. Himachal's capital Shimla, famous as the summer capital of the British Raj, remains a popular destination for visitors. Manali, the state's other big hill station, is in the heart of the idyllic Kullu Valley. Watered by



the Beas river, it is an excellent base for treks and excursions. West of Kullu, with the magnificent Dhauladhar Range as its backdrop, is the Kangra Valley, dotted with apple orchards. Its main town is Dharamsala, home to the Dalai Lama and a vibrant Tibetan community, and the seat of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. In the eastern part of the state is Kinnaur with its green pastures and enchanting villages, while Lahaul and Spiti to the north are lands of rugged grandeur, with Buddhist monasteries clinging to steep, rocky cliffs.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

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Shimla ●



Stained glass,
Christ Church

A popular hill station in North India Shimla's spectacular location, thickly forested slopes and invigorating climate have attracted countless visitors since the small village was discovered by Captain Charles Kennedy in the early 19th century. In 1864, it became the summer headquarters of the British government in India. Today it is the fast growing capital of Himachal Pradesh. Though many of the surrounding spurs and forests are now covered with concrete buildings, Shimla still retains much of its colonial charm.



Christ Church and the Municipal Library on the Ridge

■ The Ridge

N of The Mall

A popular promenade and the centre of Shimla's busy social and cultural scene, the Ridge, situated at a height of 2,230 m (7,316 ft), is an open stretch of land on the western shoulder of Jaghu Hill. From here, the snowcapped peaks of the Himalayan Range stretch in an arc across the northern horizon. Ceremonial parades and official state functions are also held here.

■ Christ Church

☐ daily ☙ 8am, 11am Sun

Contact caretaker if church is closed. Dominating the eastern end of the Ridge is the Gothic Christ Church, a prominent landmark. Constructed in 1846, it was one of the first churches built in North India. Its fine stained-glass windows and impressive organ were acquired in the 19th century. The fresco around the chancel window was designed by Lockwood Kipling, Rudyard Kipling's father. Shimla's mock-Tudor Municipal Library is nearby.

■ The Mall

Shops ☐ Mon-Sat. Restricted vehicular movement

This 7-km (4-mile) long thoroughfare running from Bouleauganj in the west to Chiloti Shimla in the south-east, demarcates the original limits of the town. The central section of The Mall, flanked by rows of half-timbered buildings, has always been, and still remains, its most fashionable area with a profusion of restaurants, bars and up-market shops. The Mall's highest spot, Scandal Point, is marked by a statue of Lala Lajpat Rai, the famous freedom

fighter. The so-called "scandal" refers to the reputed abduction of an English lady in the late 19th century from this spot by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala (see p102). Nearby are the timber-framed Post Office, the Town Hall, and the jewel-like Gaiety Theatre, opened in 1887 and still a popular venue for amateur dramatics. A favoured pastime for both local residents and visitors, is to stroll along The Mall, from Scandal Point to Combermere Bridge. Further ahead on this stretch lies the charming mock-Tudor Clarkes Hotel.

■ Lower Bazaar

Shops ☐ Mon-Sat

Below the central section of The Mall is the Lower Bazaar which Kipling once referred to as "that crowded rabbit warren catering to the native population of Shimla". Offering the option of cheaper wares and less fashionable hosteries and eating places, it remains the poor man's Mall. Lower still is the **Ganj**, a congested bazaar where the town's wholesale trade in groceries takes place. Thus, more than any other part of town, retains a flavour of times gone by. Customers and cooks mingle in crowded lanes replete with the aroma of the many spices on display.

■ State Museum

Chaura Maidan. Tel (0177) 280 5044

☐ Tue-Sun. ☑ public hrs. ☎ ☑


The State Museum, housed in a reconstructed Raj building called Inverarm, was opened to the public in 1974. It has, since then, built up a fairly good collection of almost 10,000 artifacts from various parts of Himachal Pradesh. The exhibits, displayed in 15



The interior of the Gaiety Theatre, a focal point of Shimla's cultural life

galleries, include stone sculptures dating from the 6th to 11th centuries, belonging to the Gupta and Pratihara periods, and a collection of Kangra miniatures (see p121) representing various themes based on the seasons (*Baramasa*), musical modes (*Ragamata*) and episodes from the *Gita Govinda*, a devotional poem. Most impressive, however, is a spectacular series of mid-19th-century wall paintings from Chamba, housed in the ground floor galleries.




Jakhu Hill Temple

Jakhu Hill  daily
The forested dome of Jakhu Hill, at 2,450 m (8,038 ft) is the highest point in Shimla. At its peak stands a temple dedicated to the monkey god Hanuman. According to the epic *Ramayana* (see p27), Hanuman rested here during his journey to fetch the Sanjivini herb from the Himalayas to save the wounded Lakshman's life. A steep 2 km (1.3 miles) climb from the Ridge to the summit through deodar and oak forests offers panoramic views of Shimla and its suburbs. Monkeys are a

common sight all over Shimla but Jakhu is their kingdom. Visitors should watch out for simian hands rifling through their pockets and belongings.







Viceregal Lodge

The Mall. **Tel** (0177) 283 1375

 daily  

The most imposing British-built building in Shimla is the former Viceregal Lodge. Situated atop Observatory Hill, this grey stone structure in the English Renaissance style was built under the guidance of Lord Dufferin in 1888, as a suitable summer residence for the viceroys of India. Well-maintained gardens surround the stately mansion on three sides. The interior is as impressive, with two rows of

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Shimla district 375 km (233 miles) N of Delhi  142 200
 21 km (13 miles) SE of Shimla
   HP Tourism, The Mall, (0177) 265 8302  Sipu Fair (May) **Travel permits** are required for some areas of Himachal (see p115). Contact Deputy Commissioner, (0177) 265 3535

balconies overlooking the magnificent teak-paneled entrance hall. A bronze plaque behind the building lists the peaks visible at a distance. It is now called Rashtrapati Niwas and houses the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. Only the entrance hall and the gardens are open to the public.



The stately Viceregal Lodge, set amid manicured lawns

SHIMLA CITY CENTRE

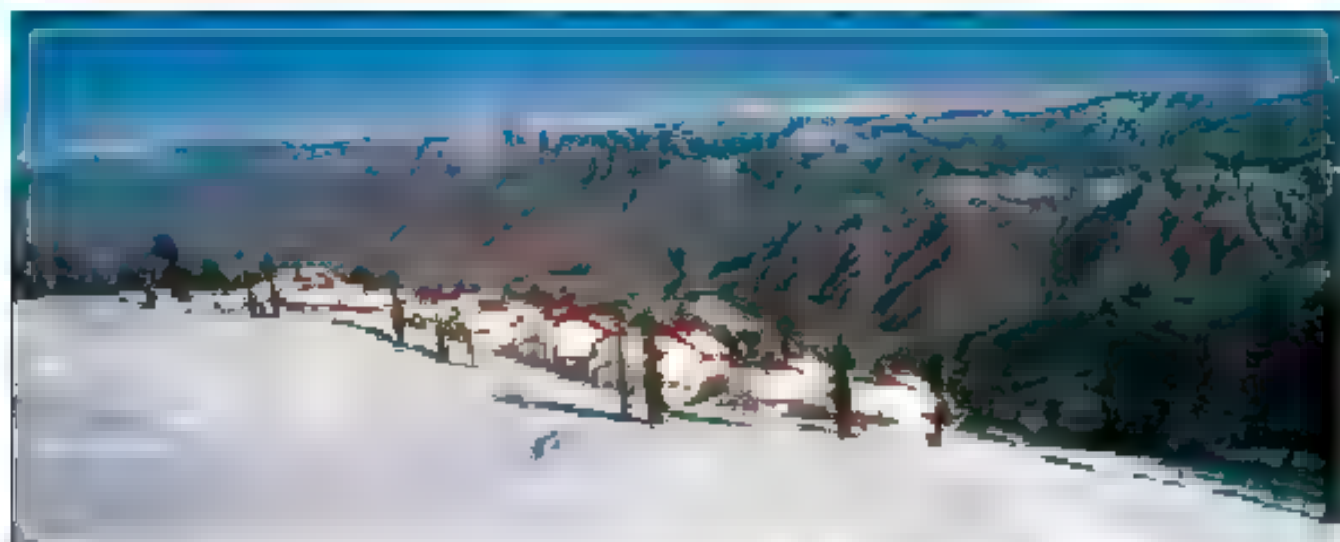
- Christ Church ②
- Lower Bazaar ④
- The Mall ③
- The Ridge ①



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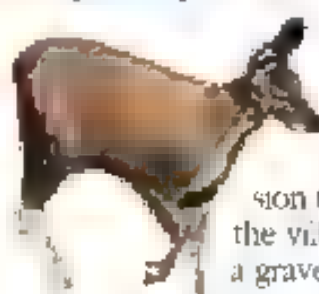
Key to Symbols see back flap



Campsite at Kufri, under a heavy blanket of snow in winter

Exploring Shimla

The best way to explore Shimla is to walk along the many meandering roads and byways. Beyond the centre (see pp110–11), the meadow of **Annandale** is 5 km (3 miles) north of the Ridge. During the Raj, all major social events, including races, cricket matches and fairs, were held here. The **Glen**, another popular picnic spot, is further west and is reached by a path near the **Onion Cell** (see p693). This grand colonial structure, built on a precipice, is reminiscent of Raj-era luxury. Across the spur from here are the scenic **Chadwick Falls**. A 4-km (2.5-mile) long forest road, starting from Christ Church on the Ridge, continues along the wooded slopes of Jakhu Hill. This road winds southeast to end near one of Shimla's oldest educational institutions, St Bede's College for Women, en route overlooking the quaint bazaar of Chhota Shimla.



Musk deer in the Himalayan Nature Park

Deeper into the hills and along the same ridge system as Shimla, are a number of places to visit. At Charobra, 13 km (8 miles) north of Shimla.

Wildflower Hall, the former retreat of the Commander-in-Chief Lord Kitchner, is now a plush hotel (see p693). About

10 km (6 miles) north along the old Hindustani-Tibet (HT) Road, just above the diversion to the left leading to the village of **Mashobra**, a gravel road barred by a gate to the right indicates the entrance to the **Seog Wildlife**

Sanctuary and the old Seog rest house. The sanctuary is home to local species of wildlife, including deer, hill fox and monal pheasants. At Mashobra, a steep forest pathway leads to a lovely little temple dedicated to a local goddess, set in a grove of deodars. The annual Sipi Fair is held here.

Continuing north from Mashobra, 3-km (2-mile) along a motor road, is the **Cragnano Rest House**. Once the home of an Italian count, it commands superb views from its hilltop garden. Further north, 10 km (6 miles) is **Naldehra** with a nine-hole golf course set amidst sloping meadows and fringed by deodar and blue pine. A British legacy dating from the 19th century, the golf course was

designed by the viceroy, Lord Curzon. About 16 km (10 miles) east of Shimla is the picturesque little village of **Kufri**. At an altitude of 2,650 m (8,694 ft), it is now becoming a popular venue for winter sports. Kufri's small zoo, the **Himalayan Nature Park**, counts the Himalayan black bear and the musk deer among its residents.

Seog Wildlife Sanctuary

For permission contact: Divisional Forest Officer, Shimla Municipal Corporation. Tel (0177) 265 2911

Himalayan Nature Park

Kufri ☐ daily

Chail

Solan district, 45 km (28 miles) SE of Shimla. ☎ **Hotel Chail Palace**, (01792) 248 141

This tiny hill station is situated on a wooded ridge at a similar altitude to Shimla. Chail was developed as the summer capital of the Patiala maharajas (see p102) in the 1920s. **Chail Palace**, a stone mansion occupying a flattened hilltop, amid beautiful orchards and garden, is now a deluxe hotel (see p692). The cricket pitch, near the top of a hill, is said to be the highest in the world. The Patiala rulers, enthusiastic cricketers themselves, invited the Marylebone Cricket Club (the MCC) to play here in 1933. Walks through the deodar forests of the Chail Wildlife Sanctuary, where Scottish red deer were introduced, are the best way to discover Chail's natural beauty.




Naldehra's scenic golf course

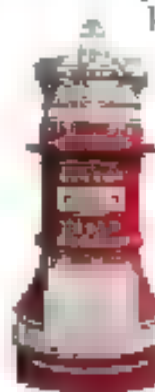


A temple on Hatu Peak, a day's hike from Narkanda

Narkanda ❶

Shimla district 64 km (40 miles) N of Shimla 

Narkanda, at a height of 2,750 m (9,022 ft), stands on the HT Road as it winds along the edges of the ridge-line dividing the Satluj and Yamuna catchments. From here, the Himalayan peaks are even closer and the walks through dense temperate forests where spruce, fir and high-altitude oak take over from the deodar and blue pine, are quite spectacular. The best walk is the 6-km (4-mile) hike to Hatu Peak (3,300 m/10,827 ft), where the Gurkhas made one of their last stands against the British in 1815. The area around Narkanda is lush with apple orchards. In winter, the slopes are ideal for skiing.



Postbox, Kasauli

Kasauli ❷

Solan district 77 km (48 miles) S of Shimla  5,000 

The closest hill station to the plains, Kasauli offers the charm of quiet walks shaded by *chir* pine, oak and horse chestnut trees. It is at its best just after the monsoon, when colourful *dhamas* cover the hillsides. As an army cantonment, restrictions imposed by the authorities have prevented the old town from being taken over by concrete modern structures. As a result, old-fashioned buildings with gable roofs and wooden balconies remain intact on the **Upper and Lower Malls**, the two main streets that run right through the town. **Monkey Point**, the highest spot in the town, is 4

km (2.5 miles) from the bus station. From here there are clear views of Shimla, the meandering Satluj and Chandigarh. A particularly lovely trail across the hills is the 5-km (3-mile) walk to the **Lawrence School** at Sanawar, a public school founded by Sir Henry Lawrence (see p197) in 1847.

Environs

About 60 km (37 miles) northeast of Kasauli is **Nalagarh**, the seat of the former princely state of Hindur. The palace is now a heritage hotel called the Nalagarh Resort (see p693).

FESTIVALS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

Shivratri (Feb/Mar)

Mandi. Local deities are carried down from the surrounding hills on elaborately decorated palanquins to pay homage to Lord Shiva at the Bhootnath Temple.

Summer Festival

(May/June) Shimla and Unaramsala. This recently inaugurated festival coincides with the tourist season and attracts singers and dancers.

Minjar (Jul/Aug), Chamba. Maize shoots or *minjars*, strung on silken threads, are cast into the Ravi river at the start of this week-long festival to seek blessings for a bountiful harvest.

Manimahesh Yatra

(Aug/Sep) Bharmour. The pilgrimage to the sacred Manimahesh Lake draws thousands of Hindu devotees. Its waters are believed to cleanse the sins of a lifetime.

Dussehra (Sep/Oct), Kulu (see p127).

Lavi Fair (Nov), Rampur. Products from remote Tibet and Ladakh were once bartered with those from the plains and lower hills at this fair. Today, woollen goods and pashmina from Tibet, *chilgoza* nuts and shawls from Kinnaur and Changmarti horses from Spiti are briskly traded. **Renuka Fair (Nov)**, Nahan. People from the surrounding villages gather at the shores of the Renuka Lake to celebrate the completion of the harvest at this fair.

HILL STATIONS

By the late 19th century, when the British had consolidated their rule in India, families began to come over from Britain to join their menfolk. In the years that followed, more than 80 settlements were established in the lower hill ranges, as

summer retreats for the burgeoning expatriate population, keen to escape the intense heat of the plains. Hill stations endeavoured to recreate a way of life reminiscent of the home country, complete with half-timbered houses, clubs, churches, hospitals, parks with bandstands and a main street invariably known as The Mall. Boarding schools,

with excellent teaching facilities, were also set up for children who were unable to go back to study in England.



Kennedy's Cottage, by Captain J Luard, Shimla, 1822



Colourful Kinnauri shawls on sale at the Lavi Fair, Rampur

Trekking in Himachal Pradesh



A cone from
a deodar tree

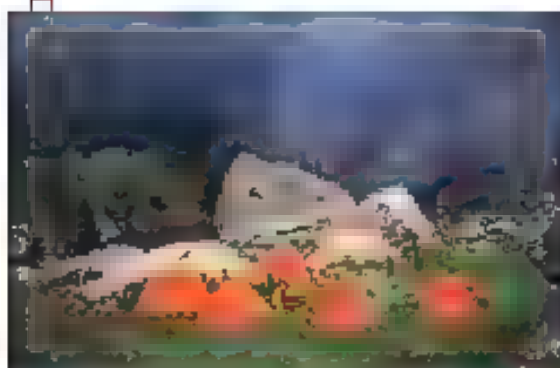
This mountainous state, with its vast variety of terrains, offers a wide range of treks from easy, one-day hikes to week-long routes. At lower altitudes, trails wind through forests of oak, deodar (*Cedrus deodara*) and pine while steeper climbs lead to flower-strewn alpine meadows above the tree line. The towns of Manali and Dharamsala are starting points for several popular treks. The best season for trekking is during the month of June and then later between mid-September and October, after the monsoon. During the rains (June–September), the trans-Himalayan cold deserts of Spiti (see p130) and Upper Kinnaur are ideal destinations, completely shielded from monsoon showers.



LOCATOR MAP

Area shown below

0 km 20
0 miles 20



Dharamsala to Macchetar

A challenging 75-km (47-mile) route crosses rocky terrain to the meadows at Trilund. A steep ascent leads to the Indrabar Pass, with views of the Pir Panjal peaks, and ends at the small town of Macchetar, connected by road to Chamba.

Duration: 5 days

Altitude: 4,350 m (14,272 ft)

Level of difficulty: moderate to tough

KEY

- • The Pin valley Trek
- • Naggar to Jari
- Manali to Beas Kund
- Dharamsala to Macchetar
- National highway
- Major road
- Minor road
- △ Peak
- Pass

Starting at Palchan near Manali, a 30-km (19-mile) round trip to the glacial lake of Beas Kund, leads past the ski station at Solang and over glacial moraine to the lake surrounded by snow-clad peaks.

Duration: 2 days

Altitude: 2,980 m (9,793 ft)

Level of difficulty: easy



Naggar to Jari

This 40-km (25-mile) trek crosses the Chandrabani Pass, offering fine views of the peaks surrounding Solang Nala, and leads past the isolated Malana village (see p128), to end at Jari in Parvati Valley.

Duration: 4 days

Altitude: 3,500 m (11,483 ft)

Level of difficulty: moderate





The Pin Valley Trek

Starting at Manikaran, famous for its hot springs, the 130-km (81-mile) path goes over the Pin Parvati Pass to the cold desert region of the beautiful Pin Valley. It ends at Mikkim, 40 km (25 miles) from the main roadhead at Kaza.

Duration: 7 days

Altitude: 5,319 m (17,451 ft)

Level of difficulty: tough



PRACTICAL TIPS

Be prepared: Acclimatization is essential for areas over 3,000 m (9,843 ft). See p767 for tips on altitude sickness. Guides are needed as maps are insufficient for safe passage across glaciers. For details on trekking see p751.

On the trek: Drink plenty of water. Carry a first aid kit and cooking fuel. Never burn wood, which is a scarce resource. Put out all fires properly, leaving no burning embers. Do not litter, and carry your rubbish back with you.

Permits: Foreign visitors require travel permits for parts of Spiti and Kinnaur, obtainable from the district or subdivisional magistrate's offices in Shimla (see p111), Rekong Peo (see p119), Kaza and Kullu (see p126). The offices at Kaza, (01906) 222 302 and Rekong Peo, (01789) 222 253 are the most efficient. For general details see p758.

Equipment hire & operators.

The Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports in Manali (01902) 252 342, and Yeti Trekking in McLeodganj (01892) 221 887 organize treks. The Regional Mountaineering Centre in McLeodganj, (01892) 221 787 offers mountaineering courses. In Manali, Himalayan Adventurers, (01902) 252 365, is a reputable rafting agency, the Himalayan Institute of Adventure Sports, (01902) 253 050, offers paragliding, and Himalayan Journeys, (01902) 252 365, offers mountain biking. See also p755.

Caution: Trekkers have gone missing in Parvati Valley. It is advisable to trek in groups and to take an experienced guide along.



Renuka Lake, venue of the Renuka Fair held in November

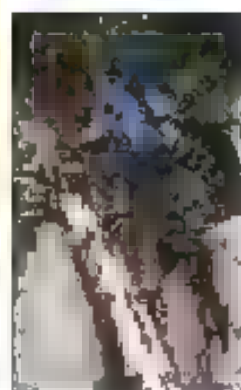
Nahan ⑥

Sirmour district, 100 km (62 miles) S of Shimla. Renuka Fair (Nov). Lying in the lower Shivalik Hills close to the plains, Nahan nestles sleepily on a low wooded ridge at 930 m (3,051 ft). The old town retains its network of narrow cobbled streets and has an interesting bazaar dating to the 17th century. The old palace (Raja Mahal) is closed to visitors. Other attractions include the Ranzore Palace facing the Chaugan (the royal polo ground), the lively Jagannath Temple in the bazaar, and the quiet walks through the chir pine forests on the Vihari Road. Nahan serves as a convenient stop-over for visiting the popular Renuka Lake nearby.

Environs

Lying 42 km (26 miles) east of Nahan, is the sacred **Renuka Lake**, whose shoreline traces the shape of a sleeping woman. According to Hindu mythology, Renuka was the wife of the sage Jamdagri and mother of Parasurama, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu (see p679). She was killed by her son at his father's command, and miraculously came back to life only to disappear again, leaving behind an imprint in the shape of her body. At the far end of the lake is a small wildlife park housing a pride of lions, Himalayan black bear and antelope. Nearby lies a smaller lake called Parasurama Tal, and below this, an open area where the Renuka Fair (see p113) is celebrated every year in November.

OTHER ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES



Climbing a rock face, Tirthan Valley

Himachal Pradesh has several peaks over 3,000 m (9,843 ft), suitable for climbing. The Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports at Manali offers three-week courses. Skiing is possible at Narkanda, Kufri and at Solang Nala near Manali. Summer is the best season for rafting and kayaking on the Beas river at Manali, and for paragliding at Solang and Biling in Kangra. Himalayan Journeys (see p752) in Manali offers mountain biking near the Rohtang Pass.



The pavilion in the spacious gardens of Rampur's palace

Rampur 6

Shimla district 130 km (81 miles)
NE of Shimla. 🚗 🚆 daily 🚏
📅 Lavi Fair (Nov)

Once on the main trade route between India and Tibet, Rampur is today a big commercial town. It comes alive in November each year when the vibrant Lavi Fair (see p113) takes place.

The early 20th-century palace of the old kings is still their private residence, though visitors are allowed to walk around the sprawling gardens. A Hindu temple and a small pavilion are set in their midst.

Sarahan 7

Shimla district 198 km (123 miles)
NE of Shimla. 🚗 🚆 daily 🚏
📅 Dussehra (Sep/Oct)

Perched high above the left bank of the Satlu, Sarahan was once the summer residence of the Rampur Bushahr kings. At 2,165 m (7,103 ft), it has a pleasant climate enhanced by the vista of the Srikhand Range across the valley, with the twin peaks of Gushu Pishu and the holy mountain Srikhand Mahadev standing out prominently. Sarahan's most interesting sight is the spectacular tower temple, **Bhimakali**. It also has a short nature trail leading to a pheasantry. The many pheasants housed here include the monal and the near-extinct Western Himalayan tragopan.

Sarahan: Bhimakali Temple



Carved tiger

The palace-cum-temple complex of the Rampur Bushahr kings, Bhimakali owes its origin to the tradition of housing the family deity on the top floor of the feudal chief's home. Its elaborate layout consists of a series of courtyards connected by beautiful gateways. The presiding deity, Bhimakali, one of the myriad forms of the goddess Kali, is housed in the first floor of the pagoda-style temple.

Although the exact age of the temple is not known, it is associated with historical events dating to the 7th century, while parts of it are around 800 years old.



View of the Bhimakali Temple Complex

The twin towers of the Bhimakali Temple covered in snow and framed against the backdrop of the Srikhand Range present an awesome sight.

The Ram Mandir is located in the second courtyard.

Slate roofs

Narasimha Temple



Main Entrance

An elaborately decorated metal door, at the entrance opens into the first courtyard.

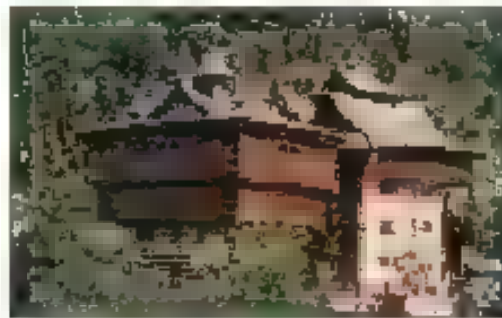
STAR FEATURES

- ★ Carved Balconies
- ★ Tower Shrines
- ★ Silver Doors



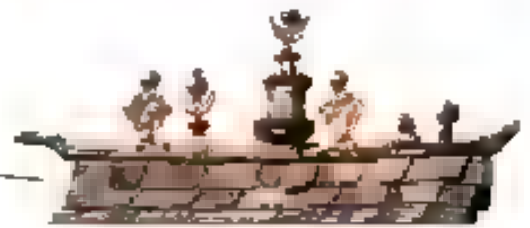
★ Carved Balconies

The uppermost storey of the renovated temple is fringed by overhanging balconies with exquisitely carved panels



★ Tower Shrines

The Leaning Tower (on the right) was the main temple until it was damaged during an earthquake in 1905. The adjoining tower has since become the main shrine



Golden Finials

The finials, a combination of symbols of the sun and the moon, represent the deity and the royal patrons



Wooden Skittles

Carved wooden skittles hang from the eaves of the temple roofs

Alternating bands of stone and timber

Carved tiger statue



★ Silver Doors

The silver doors that lead to the second courtyard are embellished with panels depicting various Hindu gods. They were added during the reign of Padam Singh (1914-47), a Rampur Bushahr king



Dussehra Festival

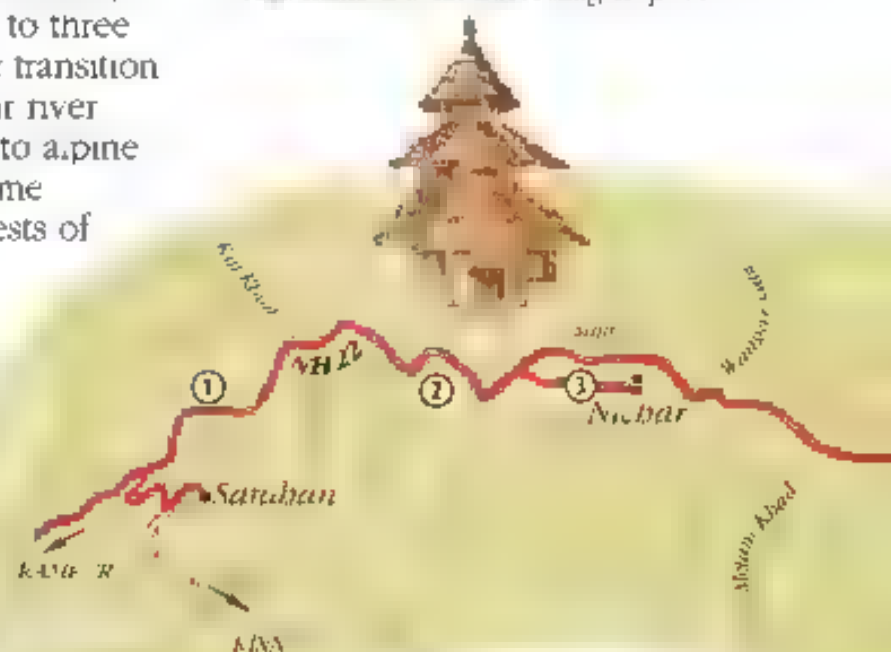
Dussehra is the only time of the year when the original 200-year-old image of Bhimakali is actively worshipped

Sangla Valley Tour ⑧

The largest village in Kinnaur, Sangla, often lends its name to the whole Baspa Valley. A drive through this area takes two to three days and encapsulates a dramatic transition in landscape, from the spectacular river gorge at the entrance to Kinnaur to alpine valley pastures. It takes in awesome mountain scenery and mixed forests of oak and rhododendron, before reaching charming slate-roofed villages that nestle amidst orchards and fields.

Temple at Sungra Maheshwar ③

The temple's pagoda-like roof and the fine wooden carvings on its doorways and walls make this an interesting stopover.

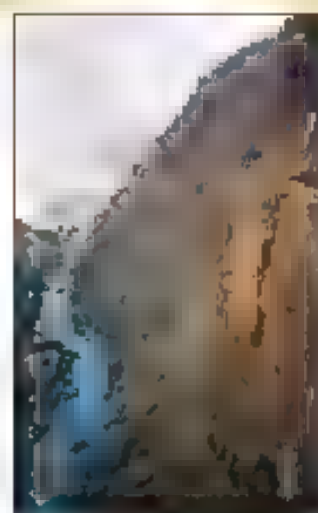


Kafour ①

Strung out along a little spur below the road, scenic Kafour is the first inhabited village in Kinnaur. The Hirma Temple, dedicated to a local mother goddess, stands out amid the slate rooftops.

The Satluj Gorge at Tranda ②

From the road there are striking views of sheer rock walls falling 500 m (1,640 ft) to the river. On the other side, cliffs of equal magnitude enclose the Satluj in a narrow impenetrable gorge.

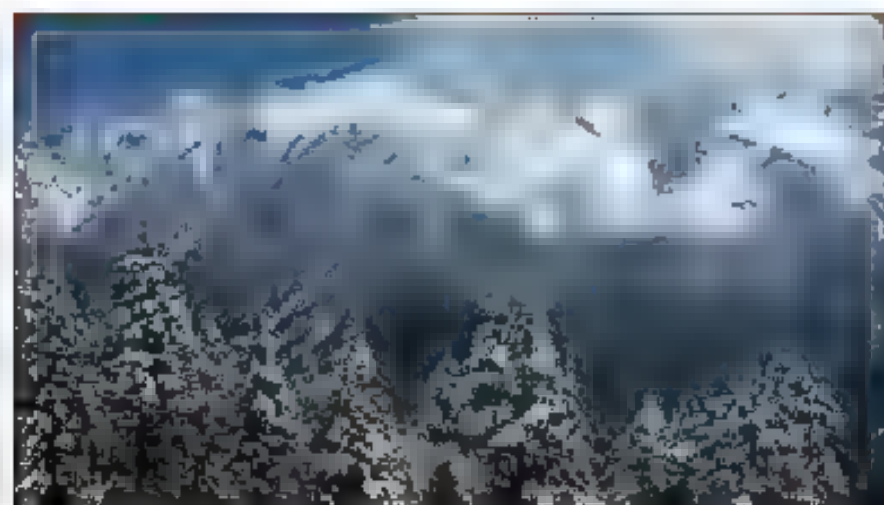


Kinnaur ⑨

Kinnaur district 244 km (152 miles), NE from Shimla to Rekonig Peo 19,250 daily Sazi (Jan). **Travel permits** are required for parts of Kinnaur. Contact the Subdivisional Magistrate's office in Rekonig Peo, (01786) 222 253. For details see p115.

Kinnaur, the remote north-eastern corner of Himachal Pradesh fringing the Tibetan Plateau, is a region of awesome grandeur. In the past, difficult terrain made Kinnaur inaccessible to all but the most intrepid of travellers, while in the 1950s its proximity to the international border with Tibet resulted in restrictions on entry. However, these restrictions have been eased since 1992.

The variations in terrain, vegetation, climate and wildlife have broadly divided this region into Lower, Middle and Upper Kinnaur. Lower



View of the Kinnaur Kailash on a clear winter day

Kinnaur hugs both banks of a gorge-like Satluj river. The left bank's forested mountain slopes, contour-hugging terraced fields and tightly packed rows of houses clinging to the hillsides are picturesque in contrast to the right bank, which is steeper, with higher peaks and a smaller population. Middle Kinnaur is much more rugged

Dominating its heart are the majestic heights of the Kinnaur Kailash Range, while to its south is the gentler valley of the Baspa, one of the Satluj's largest tributaries. The arid sweep of the Zaskar peaks makes Upper Kinnaur a cold desert country of stark, barren mountains interspersed with occasional villages and irrigated fields.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp692-4 and pp722-3



Sapri ④
Sapri village has a tower temple that contains some of the finest examples of wooden sculpture in Kinnaur.

KEY

- Tour route
- Road
- River

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: 90 km (56 miles)
Getting around: The tour begins at Kafour village. The steep road is rough and winding, and is best negotiated with a 4-wheel drive. Sangla and Chitkul villages offer places to stay and eat, as well as a few shops with basic provisions.

**Kamroo ③**

The tower of the Kamroo Narayan Temple commands a picturesque view of the valley. Fields and orchards slope down to the Baspa on one side of the river, while on the other side, thick forests rise up to pasturelands.

Sangla ⑥

The largest among the villages that dot the Baspa Valley, Sangla has some beautiful walks to offer.

**Chitkul ⑦**

The tour ends at the village of Chitkul, just before the pastures of the Upper Baspa Valley. The valley's blue poppy was admired by the explorer Marco Polo in 1333.

Rekong Peo, the new district headquarters, is a bustling little town up on the right bank of the Satluj river, with some shops and adequate transport connections. About 13 km (8 miles) higher up on the same mountain is **Kalpa**, the old headquarters. With its panoramic view of the Kinnaur Kailash Range, Kalpa is a must in any Kinnaur itinerary. The choice of walks include one to the upland pastures through deodar and *chilgoza* pine (*Pinus gerardiana*) forests. Some old temples can be seen in the nearby Chini village.

About 20 km (12 miles) from Rekong Peo, the Baspa river joins the Satluj at its left bank. The beauty of the **Sangla Valley** (or Baspa Valley) has been extolled both in local legend and by visitors over the years, and the region lends itself to a lovely trip by road. Apart from a furious rush in its

last stretch of its course, the Baspa river ambles along a wooded valley past serene villages. Stupendous gneiss faces and forests of deodar, pine and birch reaching up to long swards of pasture and snow-covered peaks surround the valley. Every village in this valley, from Sangla to Chitkul, offers glorious walks and a choice of festivals to celebrate with the local people.

Buddhism holds complete sway throughout Upper Kinnaur.

Fluttering prayer flags and mud-walled Buddhist temples with clay images and wall paintings dot the region, reflecting its proximity to Tibet. Many temples are created to the 11th-century

scholar Rinchen Zangpo, revered in Tibetan Buddhism as the Lotsawa (Translator), who initiated the mammoth task of translating Indian texts into Tibetan. He was also the main force behind a great temple-building movement and supposedly built 108 monasteries in one night.

Nako, 100 km (62 miles) from Rekong Peo, has a small lake and is close to Reo Purgyal, the highest peak in Himachal Pradesh at 6,816 m (22,362 ft).



Young Buddhist monks in a monastery, Kinnaur



A cluster of village houses with sloping roofs in Mandi

Mandi ⑩

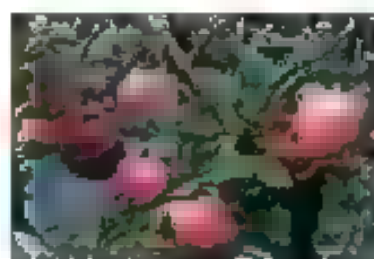
Mandi district 156 km (97 miles) N of Shimla. 26,900 Joginder Nagar, 53 km (33 miles) NW of Mandi, then taxi or bus. Shivratri (Feb/Mar)

Often referred to as the gateway to the Kullu Valley (see p126) Mandi is situated at the confluence of the Beas river with a small rain-fed tributary. The capital of the erstwhile princely state of Mandi, this small market town once functioned as a vital link between the hill communities on either side of it. The busy market located in a stunted garden in the centre of town, where all manner of merchandise is sold, is one of the more interesting sights here. Also situated in the town centre is the former residence of the Mandi kings, built in the colonial style, and now the heritage Rajmahal Palace Hotel. Several 16th- to 17th-century temples with beautiful stone carvings can be found all over the town. The most famous among these are the Madho Rai Temple, the Tarna Devi Temple and the Bhootnath Temple where the Shivratri festival is celebrated.

Environs

Rewalsar, a peaceful village at a height of 360 m (1,181 ft) is 24 km (15 miles) southeast of Mandi. On the shores of the Rewalsar Lake, resting in the hollow of a mountain spur, are a Buddhist monastery, three temples and a gurdwara commemorating the month-long stay of the tenth Sikh guru, Gobind Singh, in 1738. It is said that Padmasambhava, the 8th century Indian apostle credited with bringing Buddhism to Tibet, used his legendary powers to fly from here to Tibet. His spirit is believed to reside in the tiny floating reed islands on the lake.

Mandi's hinterland contains many other places of scenic beauty. To the east **Jhanjheli** and **Karsog**, both about 100 km (62 miles) away in apple orchard country, offer the possibility of lovely treks to the hilltop temples of Shikari Devi and Mahunag.



Mandi district apple orchard

Kangra Valley ⑪

Kangra district 222 km (728 miles) NW of Shimla. 2,200. Gaggai, 10 km (6 miles) N of Kangra town. Joginder Nagar and Una

Located in the western part of Himachal Pradesh and spread between the Shivalik foothills and the Dhaulaghar Range, the Kangra Valley is a land of gentle beauty. Undulating expanses of tea gardens and terraced paddy fields are crisscrossed by sparkling snow-fed rivulets. Kangra is the most populated district of Himachal Pradesh and is well connected with the plains as it is situated along the border with Punjab.

The valley derives its name from the ancient town of Kangra, even though Dharamsala (see p122) is the present district headquarters. The history of the town goes

back 3,500 years when it was called Nagarkot and was the capital of the kingdom of Trigarta. In 1620, Kangra and its fort

were captured by Emperor Jahangir, after which it became a Mughal province. Dominating the town today are the ruins of the once formidable Kangra Fort, perched on top of a steep cliff overlooking the Banganga and Majhi rivulets. Within the fort's compound are two Hindu temples.



The square-shaped Rewalsar Lake resting in the hollow of a mountain spur

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp692-4 and pp722-3



The towering spire of Brajeshwari Devi Temple in Kangra town

dedicated to Ambika Devi (local goddess) and Lakshmi Narayan, and a Jain temple with a stone image of Adinath. Behind the crowded bazaar is the Brajeshwari Devi Temple, whose fabled riches were plundered by Mahmud of Ghazni. (see p48) in 1009. The present structure was built in 1920, after the terrible earthquake of 1905 destroyed the city and original temple.

Some 40 km (25 miles) southwest of Kangra town, are the 15 monolithic rock-cut temples of **Masroor** dating to the 10th century and carved in a style similar to those at Ellora (see pp476-8). The picturesque **Jwalamukhi**

Temple, 35 km (22 miles) southwest of Kangra, is one of North India's most important pilgrimage sites.

Further east of Kangra, the beauty of the tea garden country unfolds around **Palampur**, 45 km (28 miles) away. East of Palampur, are the 9th-century stone **Bajinath Temple** dedicated to Shiva, **Bir** with its Tibetan Buddhist monastery, and **Biling**, well-known as a take-off point for paragliding over the valley.

About 30 km (25 miles) southeast of Palampur, is the fortress of **Sujanpur-Tira**, located on the right bank of the Beas. Built by the Kangra kings in the early 18th century, it was the favoured

residence of Raja Sansar Chand, the renowned patron of Kangra miniature painting. The fortress also preserves some excellent wall paintings.

At the far end of the Kangra Valley is **Jogindernagar**, 35 km (34 miles) south of Palampur, the terminus of a narrow gauge railway line that winds up the valley from Patankot in the west.

The **Maharana Pratap Sagar Lake**, created in 1979 by the construction of the Pong Dam across the Beas, lies to the southwest of Kangra district. This large wetland, spread over 15,000 ha (11,200 acres) when full, is a favoured stopover for migratory birds from Central Asia.



Terraced paddy fields in the Kangra Valley

PAHARI MINIATURE PAINTINGS

Pahari or 'hill' painting refers to the various schools of miniature painting such as Kangra, Basohli, Mankot and Guler, that flourished between the mid-17th and the late 19th centuries in the Rajput kingdoms situated in the long narrow region of the Himalayan foothills.

Although there is evidence of painting in this region as early as 1550, the earliest group of distinctive Pahari style paintings appeared in about 1650 in the small state of Basohli. These miniatures, horizontal in format, use flat planes of bold colours, mainly reds and yellows.



Kangra miniature, 1788, depicting Krishna killing the serpent-demon, Kaliya

Stylized architecture and figures with large eyes and straight profiles wearing elaborate costumes and jewellery, are typical of these miniatures, which illustrate the *Rasamanjari*, a Sanskrit poem on the behaviour of lovers. In the 18th century the neighbouring state, Mankot, developed an equally vibrant style, remarkable for a series of portraits of grandees of the court. By the late 18th century the vitality of local tradition had melowed under Mughal influence and a lyrical, more tranquil palette with a naturalistic rendering of forms characterized the miniatures from Guler and Kangra. Guler's painting tradition was dominated by one family of artists of whom the most talented was Nainsukh. Painting in Kangra flourished under the reign of Raja Sansar Chand (r 1775-1823). The highly refined style that emerged during this period concentrated on the lush, idyllic landscape as the backdrop for romantic scenes. Other centres of Pahari painting included Mandi, Jammu, Nurpur, Chamba and Kullu.

Dharamsala 12

Kangra district 238 km (148 miles)
NW of Shimla 19,100
Gaggai, 11 km (7 miles), S of town
centre Pathankot, 80 km (50
miles) NW of Dharamsala, then bus or
taxi. HP Tourism, McLeodganj,
(01892, 221 205) daily
Summer Festival (May), Bodhi Festival
(Oct/Nov)

This hill station established by the British in the mid-19th century, is today the home of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Located on the lower spurs of the Dhaulaghar Range, the town consists of two sections – the lower town with the main bus stand and bazaar, and the upper town, known as **McLeodganj**, 9 km (5 miles) to its north, which is the destination of most foreign visitors. There is little of interest in the lower town, apart from the lively **Kotwali Bazaar** and the **Museum of Kangra Art**. The museum has an excellent collection of Kangra miniatures (see p121), and also houses a school which teaches the art of miniature painting.

McLeodganj, the upper town, named after David McLeod, the lieutenant governor of Punjab in 1848, is primarily a Tibetan settlement. Its focal point is the **Tsuglagkhang Complex**, located at the southern edge of the town, which contains the residence of the Dalai Lama (not open to visitors), the **Namgyal Monastery** where monks can be seen debating in the afternoons, and the important



Tibetan nuns in their red robes, a common sight in Dharamsala

Tsuglagkhang Temple A simple hall, painted in yellow, the temple has a raised dais from where the Dalai Lama holds discourses, and three beautiful images from the Buddhist pantheon – Sakyamuni (the Historical Buddha), Avalokitesvara (see p141), and Padmasambhava (see p120 & p139). The Dalai Lama is believed to be an incarnation of Avalokitesvara. Another temple in the complex has an intricate mural of the Kalachakra ("Wheel of Time") and beautiful sand mandalas painstakingly created by the monks over a period of time and then ritually destroyed.

Situated at the northern edge of town are the **Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts**, and the beautiful **Norbulingka Institute** where traditional arts and crafts are promoted. **Gangchen Kyishong**, the administrative centre of the

Tibetan Government-in-Exile is midway between the upper and lower towns. This complex includes the excellent **Library of Tibetan Works and Archives** – a museum on the first floor with bronze images and *thangkas*, as well as the **Institute of Tibetan Medicine**. Nearby is the **Nechung Monastery** the seat of the

Tibetan State Oracle, whose predictions about major events in the coming year carry great weight in the Tibetan community. Also on the road to Kotwali Bazaar just below McLeodganj is the picturesque **Church of St-John-in-the-Wilderness**, a grey stone structure built in 1852. Brass plaques and superb Belgian stained-glass windows can be seen inside the church. The tomb of

Lord Elgin, the British viceroy who died here in 1863 while on holiday, lies in the churchyard.

Museum of Kangra Art
Main Rd, Dharamsala Tel (01892)
224 214. Tue–Sun

Library of Tibetan Works and Archives
Gangchen Kyishong, McLeodganj Rd. Mon–Fri

St-John-in-the-Wilderness
daily 11am–Sun

Enviroms

The pretty village of **Dharamkot**, north of McLeodganj, is reached by a 3-km (2-mile) long road, lined with deodar and oak trees. There are superb views of the Kangra Valley from the village.



Stained glass, St-John-in-the-Wilderness



The brightly-painted façade of Namgyal Monastery, McLeodganj

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp692–4 and pp722–3

Little Tibet

When the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, fled Tibet in 1959 after the Chinese occupation Dharamsala became his new home and the base of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. The town is today often called Little Tibet, preserving Tibet's religious and



Butter lamp

cultural heritage, keeping the Tibetan cause alive internationally, and serving as the focal point for the 100 000 Tibetans scattered in refugee settlements all over India. Dharamsala also attracts Buddhists from across the world, such as the Hollywood actor Richard Gere.



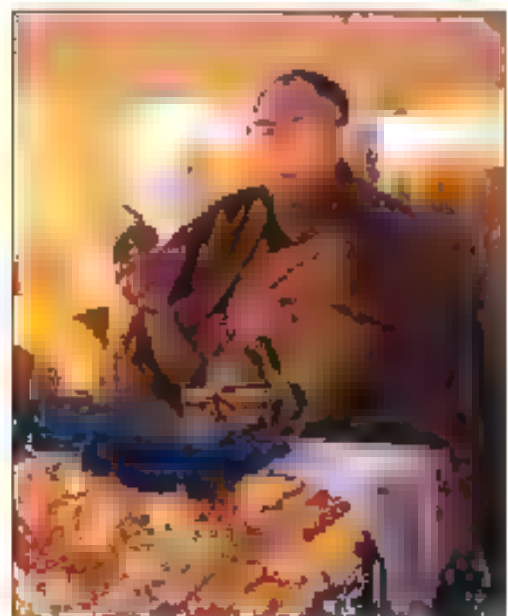
The Tibetan flag is dominated by a snow-covered mountain representing Tibet. The six red hands symbolize the six Tibetan tribes.

RELIGION AND CULTURE

Dharamsala's many monasteries and crafts centres, and its performing arts school, ensure that Tibet's distinctive religion and culture continue to flourish.



Tibetan opera, known as *hamo*, has traditional folk tales, legends and myths as its themes.



The Dalai Lama, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990, is head of the Gelugpa or Yellow Hat sect (see p139) and is revered as Tibet's god-king.



The altar in a Tibetan monastery includes, apart from images of the deities, seven ritual bowls of water, butter lamps, intricate butter sculptures, as well as a bell and a thunderbolt sceptre used during prayers and special rites.



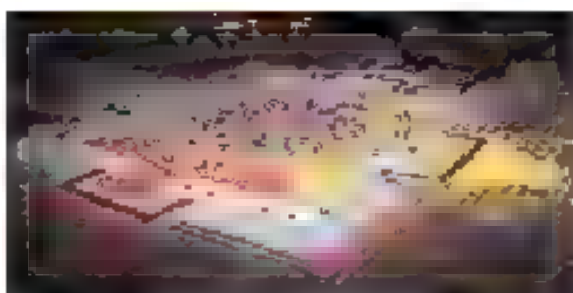
Butter sculpture



Thunderbolt sceptre

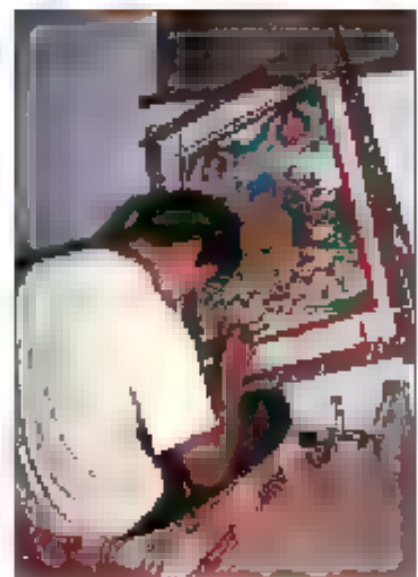


Prayer bell



Sand mandalas symbolizing the universe are meticulously created and then ceremonially destroyed. They help monks to meditate.

Thangkas, or scroll paintings framed in silk depicting Buddhist deities, are among the traditional arts kept alive by the refugees.





Sylverton, one of the many colonial houses in Dalhousie

Dalhousie 18

Chamba district 336 km (209 miles)

NW of Shimla 7,400 7,400

Geetanjali Hotel, near bus stand,

(01899, 242 136) daily

Summer Festival (Jun)

Sprawling over five hills that range in height from 1,525 m to 2,578 m (5,005 ft to 7,802 ft), Dalhousie still retains its Raj-era ambience, with spacious, gable-roofed bungalows and churches flanking its leafy lanes. Originally conceived as a sanatorium for the expatriate population rather than as a fashionable summer retreat, it was founded in 1853 and named after Lord Dalhousie, the governor-general of British India between 1844 and 1856. The most popular walks are the twin rounds of **Garam Sarak** ("Warm Road") and **Thandi Sarak** ("Cold Road") so called because one path is sunnier than the other. A shorter walk from the Circuit House to Gandhi Chowk – the central part of town where a school, church and the post office are situated – offers spectacular views of the Pir Panja Range. From Gandhi Chowk, another pleasant ramble about 3 km (2 miles) long, leads south to the pretty picnic spot of Panipula or "Five Bridges".

For Raj aficionados, a track leading off to the right from the main bus stand moves past the old British cemetery in the woods before reaching the cantonment. One of the two churches here boasts pretty stained-glass windows and sandstone arches.

Environs

A scenic road through dense forests of pine, deodar, oak, horse chestnut and rhododendron leads to the

Kalatope Wildlife Sanctuary,

about 8 km (5 miles) east of

Dalhousie. With prior

permission from the

wildlife authorities at

Chamba it is possible to

take a diversion at

Bakrota and drive to

a rest house deep

inside the sanctuary.

About 26 km (16

miles) east of

Dalhousie is

Khajjiar, situated at

a height of 2,000 m

(6,562 ft). This saucer-

shaped expanse of green

meadow, bordered by tower-

ing deodars, has a picture

postcard beauty, comparable

with the finest views in

Kashmir or Switzerland. In

the centre is a small lake with

a golden-domed Devi temple

built on a floating island.

✦ Kalatope Wildlife Sanctuary

For permission contact: Forest Depart-

ment, Chamba. Tel (01899) 222 039

Chamba 19

Chamba district 378 km (235 miles)

NW of Shimla 20,300 20,300

daily 500 Sur (Apr), Minjar (Jul/Aug)

Travel permits Contact the Deputy

Commissioner (01899, 225 371. For

details see p758

This town was chosen as the capital of the former princely state of Chamba in the 10th century, when Raja Sam Varman moved here from Bharmour. He named it Chamba after his favourite daughter Champavati, who legend says, sacrificed herself to provide water for the parched city. During the Sur festival, women and children sing her praises in the town's many temples.

A bridge over the Ravi river leads up to the town, situated on the ledge of a mountain,

overlooking the right

bank of the river. In

the town's centre is the

Chaugan, a huge

expanse of meadow

that is the focal point

of all cultural and

social life. Clustered

around it are a

number of imposing

buildings, including

the old **Akhand**

Chandi Palace, part of

which is now a college. The

Chaugan is also the main

marketplace with shops that

sell a variety of merchandise

ranging from traditional silver

jewellery with enamel led

clasps to embroidered Chamba

chappals (sandals) that may

look flimsy but are excellent

for walking up hillsides.

Chamba's towering stone

temples are some of the finest

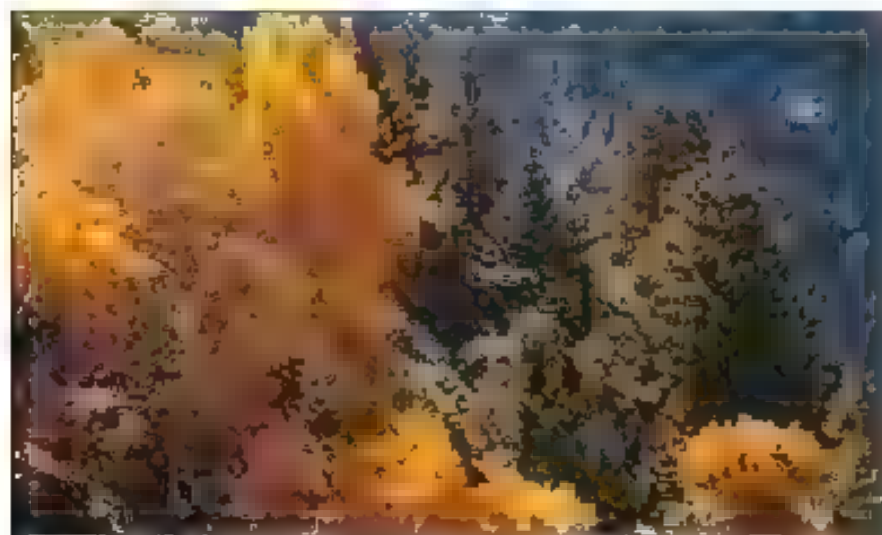
in the region. The most



Silver mask of Parvati, Chamba



Images of deities on the walls of Lakshmi Narayan Temple, Chamba



Hillsides around Chamba ablaze with the colours of autumn

important are the six North Indian *shikhara*-style temples (see p.20), that comprise the **Lakshmi Narayan Temple** complex, to the west of the Chaughan. Of these, three are dedicated to Vishnu and three to Shiva. The white marble image of Lakshmi Narayan, in the main temple, was brought from Central India in the 10th century. The carved panels on the temple walls illustrate mythological scenes as well as animal and floral motifs.

Other temples include the **Madho Rai Temple**, near the palace, with a bronze image of Krishna, and further up, the **Chamunda Temple**.

A glimpse of Chamba's rich heritage can be seen at the **Bhuri Singh Museum**, set up in 1908 by the king of Chamba at the time. His rare collection of miniature paintings formed the nucleus of the museum. Today it has a fine collection of Pahari paintings (see p.121), murals, inscribed fountain slabs, carved stone panels and other artifacts, such as Chamba *rumals*, metal masks, copper plates and silver jewellery.

Bhuri Singh Museum
S of Chaughan **Tel** (01899) 222 590. Tue–Sun

Bharmour

Chamba district 64 km (40 miles)
SE of Chamba Manimahesh
Yatra (Aug/Sep)

The Bharmour region, home- and of the semi-nomadic sheep-herding Gaddis and the first capital of the Chamba rulers, spreads across a steep

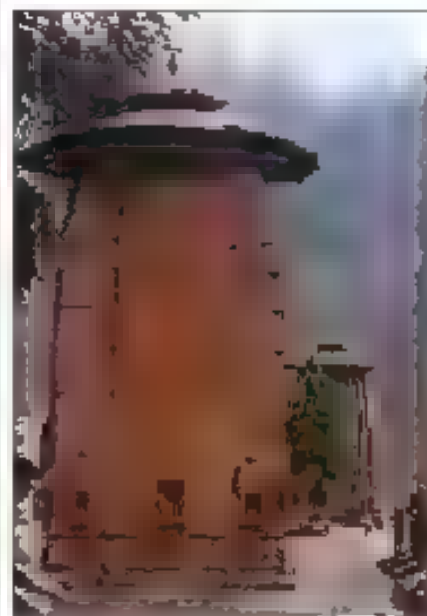
mountainside high above Budhi, a large tributary of the Ravi river. Bharmour's main attraction is the fascinating **Chaurasi** (literally, "Eighty Four") **Temple** complex, built in the 10th century under Raja Samil Varman to honour the 84 saints who visited Bharmour. The major shrines are dedicated to Narasimha, Ganesha, and the local deities Larkana Devi and Manimahesh. The intricate wooden carvings on the temple antels and the images of the main deities are outstanding, and it is said that the sculptor's hands were cut off to prevent him from replicating such remarkable work.

Environs

Situated at a height of 3,950 m (12,959 ft), **Manimahesh Lake**, 35 km (22 miles) from Bharmour, is the area's most sacred lake, as its holy waters are believed to cleanse all sins. In August/September thousands of pilgrims converge

here to participate in the annual Manimahesh Yatra (see p.113). The main motor road continues up to Haasar 16 km (10 miles) beyond Bharmour, and from there the *yatra* (procession) ascends in two stages via Dhanchho to the lake, nesting at the base of the Manimahesh Kailasa.

For the adventurous, Bharmour also offers a tough five-day trek over the Kargi Pass (5,040 m/16,535 ft) to Lahaul (see p.129). Here, 26 km (16 miles) away in the main Ravi Valley, is the base for a number of trails over the Dhauladhar Range to the Kangra Valley. It offers the option of a longer walk to the Kulu Valley as well. Down the course of the Ravi, on the road to Chamba, the **Chatrari Temple** with its exquisite bronze image of Shakti Devi, is also worth a stop.



Well-preserved 10th-century temples at Bharmour

CHAMBA RUMALS

Chamba *rumals*, exquisitely embroidered handkerchiefs or coverlets, generally square in shape, were used primarily to wrap gifts, either for temple offerings or for ceremonial exchanges during wedding rituals. At times, they also formed the canopies draped above deities in temples. Pale colours, silk thread, a double-sided satin stitch and an unbleached muslin base were the framework within which intricate compositions, inspired by delicate Pahari miniatures, were created. Originally the work of the ladies of the court, the themes were religious, interspersed with animal and plant motifs, and enclosed within floral borders.



Hand-embroidered Chamba rumal



Brightly coloured tiger guarding the Jagannathi Devi Temple, Kullu

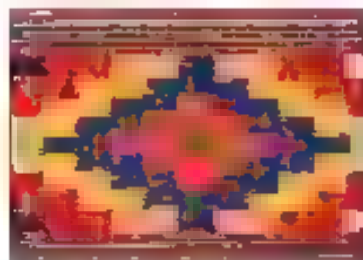
Kullu Valley 16

Kullu district 240 km (149 miles) N of Shimla. 18,300. Bhuntar, 10 km (6 miles) S of Kullu town. HP Tourism, near Maidan, (01902) 222 349. Dussehra (Sep/Oct). **Travel permits:** Contact Deputy Commissioner, (01902) 222 727. For more details see p115.

The Kullu Valley in central Himachal Pradesh, watered by the Beas river, has long been a site of human habitation. In ancient Sanskrit texts it is referred to as Kulantapith or "end of the habitable world" – an apt description when one compares the lush fields and apple orchards of this 80-km (50-mile) long valley with the desolate expanse of Lahaul (see p129), which is separated from it by the Pir Panjal Range. The local name for Kullu is the "Valley of the Gods" – its alpine setting is the gathering place for 360 gods from different temples in the region, who congregate here for the famous Dussehra festival.

Unlike British-built hill stations in the Himalayas, Kullu remained unknown to the outside world until it was "discovered" in the 1960s by the flower children, who were enchanted as much by its hillsides covered with marijuana plants (*Cannabis sativa*), as by its gentle beauty, superb mountain vistas and amiable people. The men of

Kullu Valley usually wear the distinctive Kullu *topi*, a snug woollen cap with a colourful, upturned flap. The women weave thick shawls with striking geometric designs on their borders, and few visitors can resist acquiring these attractive products, now a flourishing local industry. Equally attractive are the village houses, their slate roofs rising above green meadows.



Typical geometric pattern on the border of a Kullu shawl

Kullu, the district headquarters and the largest settlement in the valley, is located on the right bank of the Beas. The town's chief attraction is the 17th-century **Raghnath Temple**,

dedicated to Rama and Sita whose richly adorned images lead the processions at the Dussehra festival. Also worth exploring is the Akhara Bazaar, at the northern end of the town, famous for its handicrafts shops, selling shawls and traditional silver jewelry. At the southern end of town is the large green open space called **Dhalpur Maidan**, where the colourful Dussehra festivities take place.

A number of temples all with superb stone carvings and impressive images, are in the vicinity of Kullu town – the **Vaishno Devi Cave Shrine** is 4 km (2.5 miles) to the northeast,

the **Jagannathi Devi Temple** at Bekhli, 5 km (3 miles) to the north, and the **Vishnu Temple** at Dayar, 12 km (8 miles) to the west. The huge, pyramidal **Basheshwar Mahadev Temple** at Bajaura, 15 km (9 miles) to the south, has superb images of Vishnu, Ganesha and Durga. However the most famous is the **Bijli Mahadev Temple**, dedicated to the "Lord of Lightning", 14 km (9 miles) to the southeast. Located on a high spur on the left bank of the river, opposite the town, this temple has an 18-m (59-ft) high staff, which periodically attracts lightning during thunderstorms especially in the monsoon. This is regarded as a divine blessing, even though it shatters the Shiva linga in the sanctum of the temple. The stone fragments are then painstakingly put together again with a mortar of clarified butter and grain, by the head priest.

Environs

Jalori Pass, about 70 km (44 miles) south of Kullu, on the ridge line forming the divide between the Beas and Satlu rivers, offers two beautiful walks through dense, high-altitude oak forests and meadows. The first walk goes through a path with gentle gradients to the town of Saryoksar, 5 km (3 miles) away. The other walk, up a neighbouring hill, leads to the picturesque ruins of a fort occupied by the Gurkhas in the 19th century.



A waterfall in Kullu Valley



Hot springs in Manikaran, a popular pilgrim spot

Parvati Valley 12

Kullu district 180 km (112 miles) NE of Shimla (via Jalon Pass).

HP Tourism, near Maidan, Kullu, (01902, 222 349)

The scenic Parvati Valley, with its green, terraced rice fields and apple orchards draws an increasing number of visitors. However, because of illegal marijuana cultivation in the surrounding countryside, the Parvati Valley has, in recent years, gained notoriety as a centre for the narcotics

trade and several foreign visitors have gone missing from the area. It is advisable to take guides and porters available from Naggar (see p128) and Manikaran, for treks in this region.

The main settlement in the Parvati Valley is Manikaran famous for its hot springs. It is also the starting point for a number of treks (see pp114–15). An interesting legend explains the origins of the hot springs. A serpent stole the earrings of Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, and disappeared with them into a deep burrow. On witnessing Shiva's terrible anger, the snake was too terrified to come out of its hole, but managed to snort the earrings out through the earth, thus creating vents from which the hot springs come out. A bath here is said to be good for the body and the soul, and local people sometimes boil rice in the geo-thermal steam. The Rama Temple and the Shiva Temple next to a Sikh gurdwara is always thronged with sadhus.



Monal pheasant

Great Himalayan National Park 13

Kullu district 205 km (127 miles) N of Shimla, (via Jalon Pass). **Entry points:** Saing, Gushani. Shamchi, 15 km (9 miles) S of Kullu, then jeep. For bookings & permits contact Director, GHP Shamchi, (01902) 265 320.

The great Himalayan National Park, covering an area of 754 sq km (291 sq miles), ranges in altitude from 1,300 m (4,265 ft) to 6,100 m (20,013 ft), and abuts the cold desert region of Pin Valley National Park (see p130). The variety of flora and fauna found here

represents the entire Western Himalayas. A vast range of subtropical species along with alpine grasslands are covered with edelweiss and oak forests. Mammals include the Himalayan tahr, musk deer and the elusive snow leopard. Among the 300-odd species of birds, there are at least six kinds of pheasant.

A number of trekking trails and forest huts in the buffer zone offers an opportunity to explore the park.

GATHERING OF THE GODS

Kullu celebrates the festival of Dussehra with unique gusto. All over India this festival commemorates the defeat of the demon-king, Ravana, by the god Rama, a story recounted in the Hindu epic, *Ramayana* (see p27). In Kullu local traditions add their own piquancy to this pan-Indian myth. These traditions originated in the 17th century, when the ruler, Jagat Singh inadvertently caused the death of a Brahmin priest. To expiate his sin, he installed the deity Raghunath (an incarnation of Rama), on his throne and vowed that thereafter he and his descendants would rule Kullu only as regents. The image of this god was brought all the way from the holy town of Ayodhya (see p199), the birthplace of Lord Rama. From then on, every September/October, Raghunath "invites" all the local gods of the valley, to celebrate Dussehra in Kullu. These gods, 360 of them,

include Hadimba, the patron deity of the Kullu rajas from Manali (see p128) and Jamli, the reigning deity of Malana who administers justice via the village priest. The gods are carried on palanquins from their own temples and arrive at the Dhalpur Maidan in a cheerful procession accompanied by the frenzied beat of drums. Nine days of festivities follow, when a temporary market is set up, which sells everything from locally-made shawls and shoes, to brightly-hued plastic toys. The graceful *natti* dance, performed amidst a lot of friendly rivalry by several local groups, can also be watched.



Image of Vashishtha Devta, a local god



Preparing for the Dussehra festival celebrations

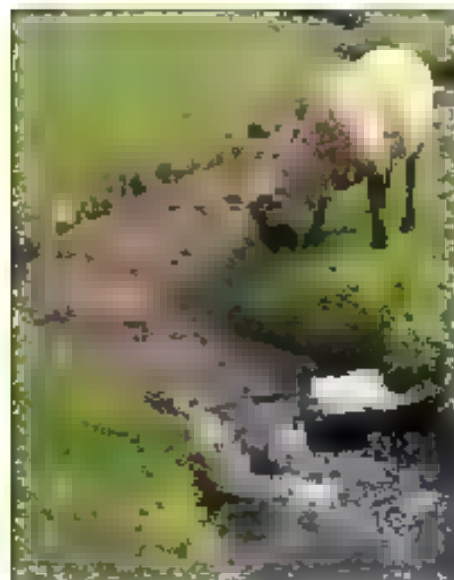
Manali 19

Shimla. 7,300. The Mall, (01902) 253 531. daily. Winter Carnival (Jan), Dhungru Meja (May).

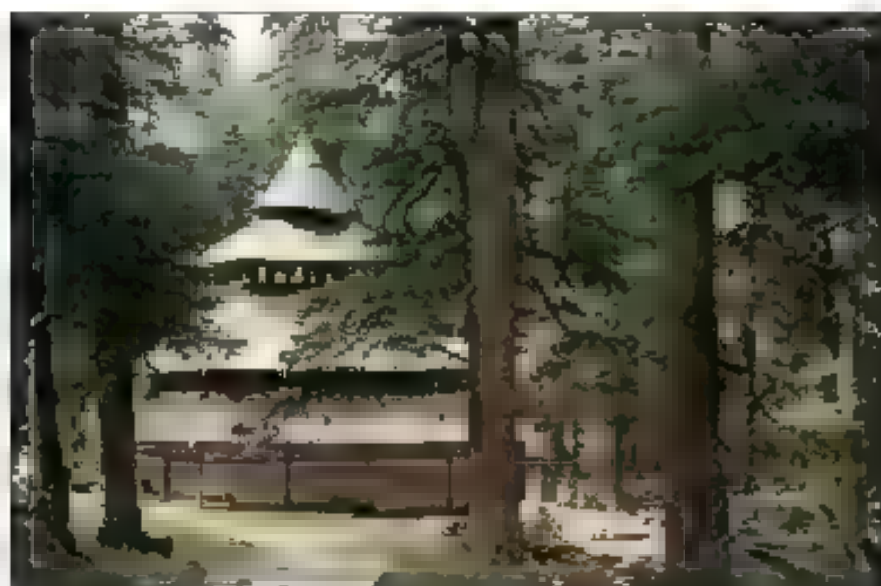
Picturesque Manali, situated along the west bank of the Beas river, is a prime destination for visitors, offering a variety of scenic walks and treks through dense forests. Though a profusion of hotels and shops in recent years has overrun downtown Manali, its environs still retain much of the natural beauty that gives this hill station a unique flavour. Particularly charming is the original village, about 3 km (2 miles) north of the main bazaar, with its temple dedicated to Mani, the Hindu sage after whom Manali is named.

Located 1.5 km (1 mile) north of the main bazaar is the sacred **Hadimba Temple**, shaded by a grove of stately deodars. This four-tiered wooden temple with its pagoda-style roof was built in 1553 around a small natural cave enshrining the footprints of the demoness Hadimba, wife of Bhima, the mighty Pandava brother (see p26)

On the left bank of the Beas, about 3 km (2 miles) north of the bazaar, the hot sulphur springs in the village of **Vashisht** are piped into Turkish-style baths. Further up the lovely **Solang Valley**, 14 km (9 miles) from downtown Manali, is the scene of most of the area's outdoor activities. Treks lead up to the pastures of Dhundi and the small



A tiny stream crisscrossing the lush landscape around Manali



The 16th-century wooden Hadimba Temple in Manali

snow-fed lake of Beas Kund (see p114). Paragliding, a popular activity, takes place on the nearby slopes, which also attract skiers in the winter.

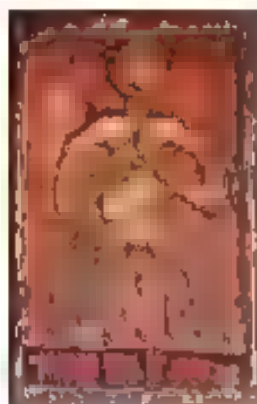
Environ

Rohtang Pass the perilous pass crossing into Lahaul, at an altitude of 3,980 m (13,058 ft), is 52 km (32 miles) north of Manali. It is a day's excursion possible only in summer with a brief halt at the spectacular Rahaala Falls along the way.

The first capital of the Kulu kings **Jagatsukh** is 6 km (4 miles) south of Manali on the left bank of the Beas. The two *shikbara*-style (see p21) stone temples here possibly date back to the 6th century. **Naggar** further south, on the same side of the river, succeeded Jagatsukh as the capital, till it was moved to Kulu (see p126) in the 17th century. The Naggar Castle, built in the 15th century, is now a hotel. It is an excellent

example of traditional local architecture with walls composed of alternate layers of wooden beams and evenly hewn stone. It commands a fine view of the Beas Valley. Nearby is the **Roerich Art**

Gallery displaying the work of the Russian painter **Nicholas Roerich**. Lying across the river from Naggar, is scenic **Katra**, surrounded by orchards. Trout fishing is a popular pastime here. The remote village of **Malana**, beyond Chanderkhan Pass, is 25 km (16 miles).




Woodcarving on a door in Malana

southeast of Naggar. Malana's isolated people live by their own code of conduct and shun contact with outsiders. Their unique culture, language and system of government set them apart from the rest of the valley. Visitors should enter the village only if invited.

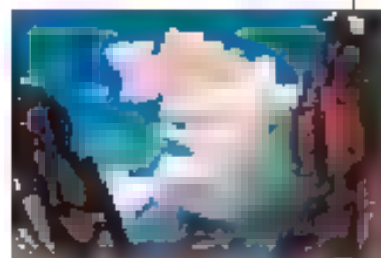
Roerich Art Gallery
Naqqar ☐ daily 📞

NICHOLAS ROERICH (1874–1947)

This multi-faceted Russian who painted, wrote poetry and expounded a universalist philosophy distilled from many religions, traveled extensively through Tibet and the Himalayas. He is best remembered for the colourful celebration of nature in his trans-Himalayan landscapes. Roerich lived in Naggar where he died in 1947. His old home is now the Roerich Museum. His son Svyatoslav, also a painter, made India his home as well.



A mountainscape by Roerich



A mountainscape by Boerich

Lahaul and Spiti 20

Lahaul and Spiti district 610 km (379 miles) N from Shimla to Keylong via Kunjam Pass. 33,200

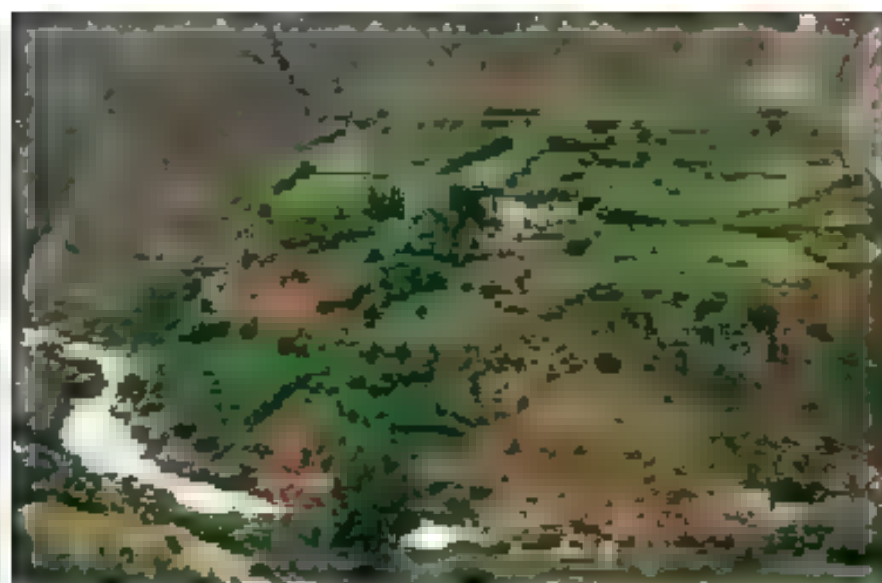
Ladarcha Festival, Spiti (Aug)

At an altitude of 2 750 m (9,022 ft), Lahaul and Spiti, bordering Tibet and Ladakh's Zaskar Valley, comprise the trans-Himalayan regions of western Himachal Pradesh. Unlike the lush meadows of the Kulu Valley, this is a barren land of rocky massifs and hanging glaciers, enclosed by the Himalayas to the north and the Pir Panjal to the south. Rainfall is scarce and the region is dependent upon glaciers for the cultivation of its main crops: barley, millet and seed potato.

While the difficult terrain inhibits many travellers from going to Spiti (see pp130–31), Lahaul is more accessible. Upper Lahaul is a stark land of high mountains enveloping the deep valleys of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers, while Lower Lahaul, lies below Tandi, where the two rivers meet and become the Chandra-Bhaga, or Chenab.

Today Lahaul's social structure is an interesting mix of Buddhism and Hinduism, reflecting the close ties the region had with Tibet, Ladakh and neighbouring Kulu.

Keylong, the district headquarters on the Bhaga river



The meandering Chenab river, near Gondha village

is the region's principal town. With many basic facilities, it is widely used as a stopover by travellers en route to Leh (see pp136–7) or as a base for treks. Across the river, opposite Keylong, a steep tree-shaded pathway leads to **Drugpa Kardang Gompa**, the largest monastery (*gompa*) in Lahaul. It has a fine collection of *thangkas* (see p123), musical instruments and old weapons. Nearby is the 16th-century **Shashur Gompa**. This

monastery is renowned for its long 4.5 m (15 ft) *thangka*.

On the road to Manali, about 16 km (10 miles) south of Keylong, the eight-storeyed tower of the Gondha chiefs

dominates the landscape. The oldest monastery in Lahaul, the 800-year-old **Guru Ghantal Gompa** at Tandi, 11 km (7 miles) southwest of Keylong, is believed to have been established by Guru

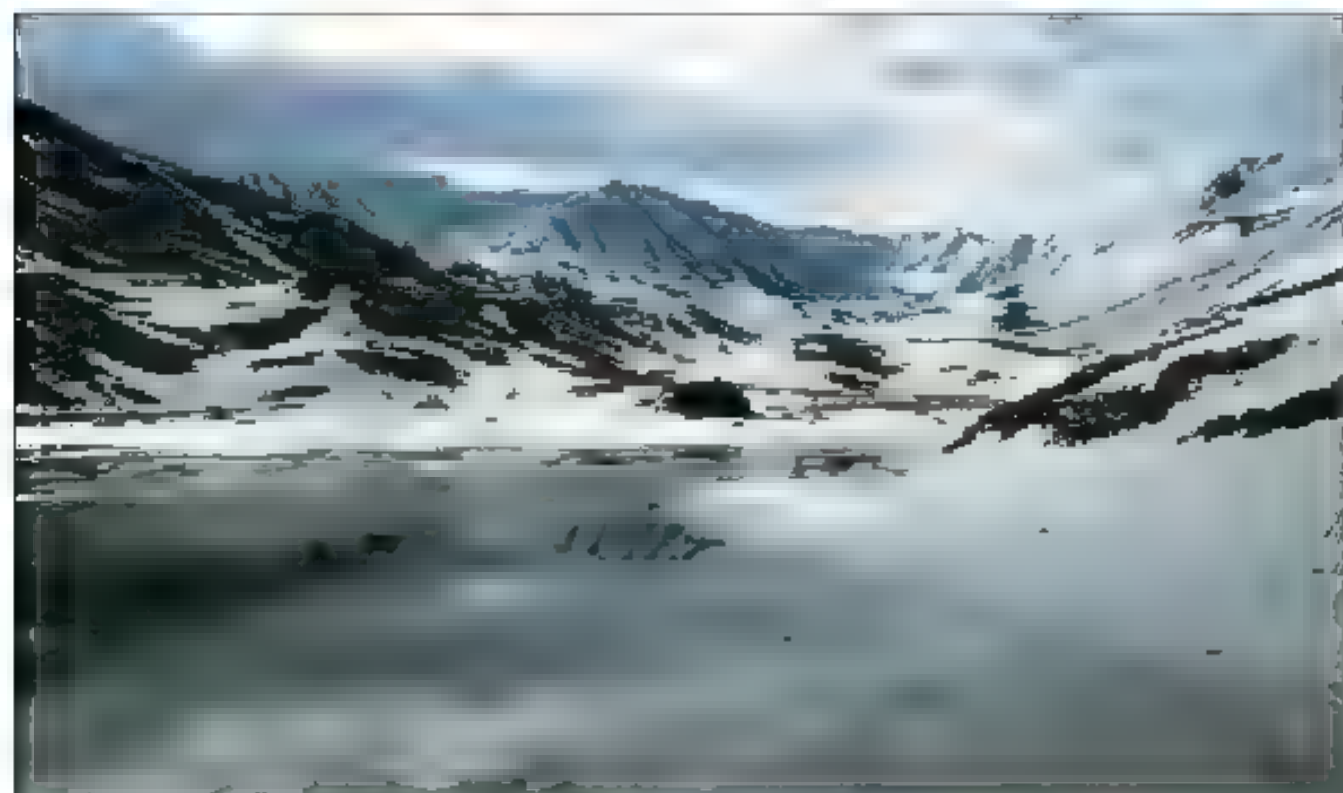
Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. Other places worth visiting are the carved wooden Minkaa Devi Temple at **Udaipur**, in the Patan Valley, 11 km (27 miles) west of Tandi, and **Trilokinath**, with its marble image of

Avalokitesvara (see p141).

Beyond Keylong, the road to Leh passes the last Lahaul village of **Darcha** with a trekking route to Zaskar (see p152) via the Shingo-la

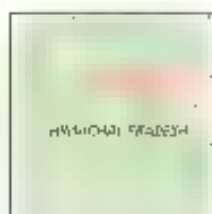


Detail of a prayer wheel at Keylong



Suraj Tal, the glacial lake that is the source of Bhaga river, one of the main rivers in Lahaul

Spiti: The Sacred Valley

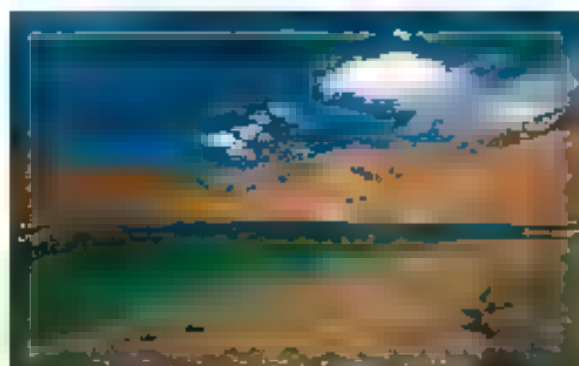


The heart of Himachal's cold desert, Spiti is a land of fascinating contrasts. Monasteries and prayer flags are dotted along the banks of glacial streams, while blue sheep and ibex graze amidst

sparse pastures sprinkled with marine fossils. Once part of a West Tibetan kingdom, Spiti submitted to Ladakhi rule in the 17th century and became a part of British India in the 19th century. Through these changes in its political history, Spiti remained a locked land, enclosed between tall mountain ranges and international borders. Though now part of Himachal Pradesh, it has retained its Tibetan character and is an important preserve of ancient Buddhist heritage.



Bare multi-hued rock faces, a typical feature of the Spiti area



Chandra Tal, or the "Moon Lake" at a height of 4,270 m (14,009 ft), lies at the entrance to Spiti when approached from Lahaul. Oval in shape with deep blue waters, it is overlooked by craggy peaks and hanging glaciers.



Key Monastery possibly founded in the 13th century is the largest monastery in Spiti. Perched on an escarpment, it has a fine collection of thangkas and is the seat of *Lochen Tulku*, a reincarnation of *Rinchen Zangpo* (see p119).

KEY

Area illustrated

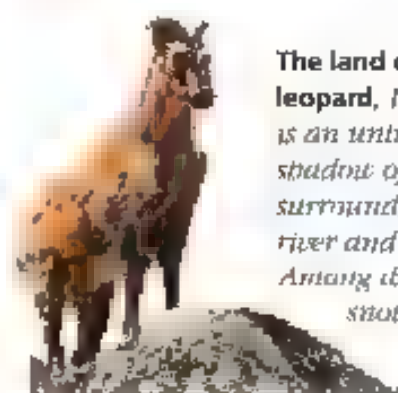
Monastery

Major road

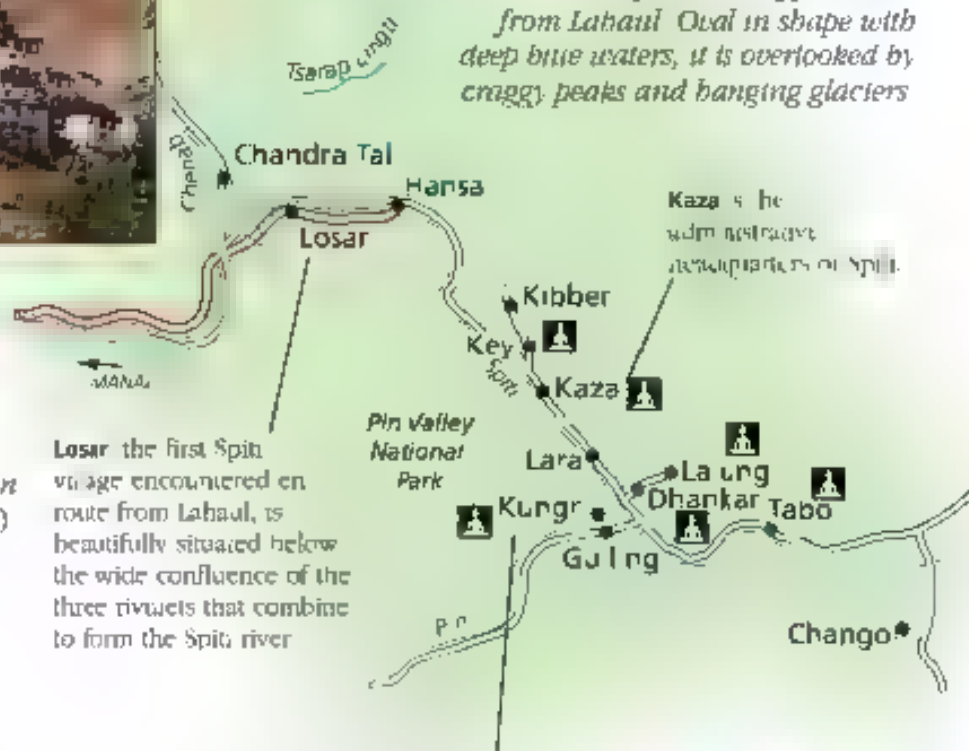
Minor road

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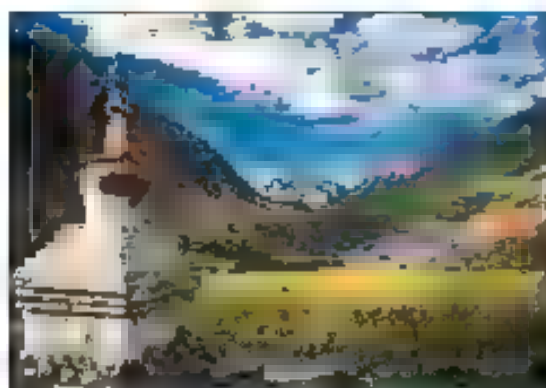
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The land of the ibex and the snow leopard, the Pin Valley National Park is an untrammelled pastureland in the shadow of virgin snow-capped peaks. It surrounds the upper reaches of the Pin river and its tributary, the Parasho. Among the carnivores, the fox and the snow wolf are common, while the beautiful snow leopard is more elusive.



Kungri Monastery in Pin Valley belongs to the Nyingmapa sect (see p139). The uppermost hall, in the main temple, contains some ancient wall paintings and wooden sculptures.



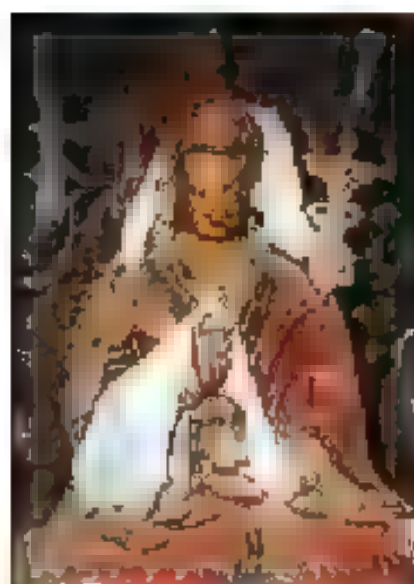
Chorten at a village in Pin Valley



Dhankar the old capital of Spiti, is wedged between the pinnacles of a razor sharp spur of crumbling rock and alkaline deposits. The old monastery, here is richly endowed with beautiful frescoes, and a bronze statue of Avalokitesvara.



Children in Spiti



An impressive image of Guru Padmasambhava, covered in gold leaf, is the highlight of Lalung Monastery. This monastery is one of the 108 structures created in Rinchen Zangpo.



Vibrant mural showing a scene from Buddhist mythology, Tabo Monastery

Tabo Monastery ㉑

Lahaul and Spiti district. 460 km (286 miles) NE of Shimla. ☎️ 📅 Apr-Sep. 🏠 Monastery Festival (Oct/Nov).

Travel permits required to travel between Tabo and Jangi (in Kinnaur). Contact Deputy Commissioner, Shimla (see p111), or SDM's office in Rekonig Peo (see p118). For details see p.15.

Tabo Monastery, Spiti's pride, is linked to an important era in the growth of Buddhism in Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism suffered a major setback during the reign of King Langcarma in the 9th century, and it took a whole century for the religion to recover. The resurgence, also known as the "second diffusion of Buddhism", was spearheaded by Ye-she-od, the Lama king of Guge in Western Tibet. Under his patronage, the legendary scholar Rinchen Zangpo spread the faith by translating Buddhist texts and promoting a tremendous temple-building movement.

The *gompa* at Tabo is one of the products of this movement, established in the 11th century by Rinchen Zangpo himself. Dating from a period when monastic temples were constructed close to villages, it is one of the largest of such centres. The squat, mud structures of Tabo are enclosed within a mud wall, about 84 m by 75 m (276 ft by 246 ft) and appear quite unimpressive from the outside. The exquisite

wall paintings inside, however, make Tabo one of the most significant art treasures of the Tibetan Buddhist world. The earliest paintings in the *dukhang* (assembly hall) are from the 10th and 11th centuries and depict scenes from various incidents and tales associated with the life of the Buddha. The hall also contains imposing clay sculptures of the chief deities from the Buddhist pantheon. Seven other chapels in the complex contain paintings from the 15th and 16th centuries. One of the shrines houses a huge clay idol of a sitting Maitreya (the Future Buddha). Tabo is also a favourite retreat of the Dalai Lama.

Accessing parts of the Spiti Valley that lie below Tabo remains difficult. Travel is restricted due to the proximity of the border with Tibet.



Monks praying at Tabo Monastery







LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR

Travelling across six major mountain ranges, and covering an area of 222 000 sq km (85,715 sq miles), Jammu and Kashmir is India's northernmost state, bordering Pakistan and China's Tibetan Plateau. Its three distinct regions – Ladakh, Jammu and the Kashmir Valley – offer a rich diversity of landscapes, religions, and people. The predominantly Muslim Kashmir Valley is a mosaic of forests, ricefields, lakes and waterways, its gentle beauty now shattered by armed insurgency (see p154). Jammu, encom-

passing plains, mountains and foothills, boasts the famous hilltop shrine of Vaishno Devi, an important pilgrimage site for Hindus. Sparsely populated Ladakh, which accounts for two-thirds of the state's area, is a high altitude desert. Its harsh lines are softened by the emerald green of oasis villages, the crystal light of cloudless blue skies, and the dramatic silhouettes of ancient Buddhist monasteries which, for many visitors, are Ladakh's main attraction.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- Jammu 11
- Kargil 10
- Leh 1
- Mulbekh 8
- Srinagar 15

Monasteries & Palaces

- Alchi Monastery 8
- Hemis Monastery 3

Matho Monastery 4

- Shay 2
- Stok 7

Areas of Natural Beauty

- Gulmarg 16
- Pahargam 17
- Rangzum 12
- Southeast Ladakh 6

Rivers & Valleys

- Suru Valley 11
- Zaskar 11

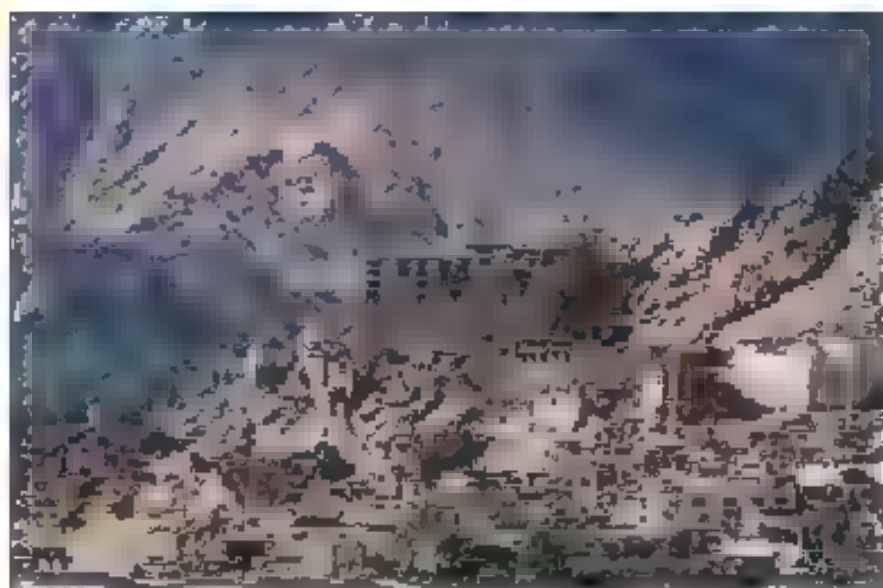
Tours

- Nubra Valley Tour 7

KEY

- Domestic airport
- National highway
- Major road
- Minor road
- Major railway
- International border
- Disputed border





The abandoned Leh Palace, once the seat of the royal family

Leh ①

Leh district 1 077 km (669 miles) N of Delhi 15,000 11 km (7 miles) S of town centre (01982) 252 297 Muharram (Mar/Apr), Buddha Jayanti (May), Losar (Dec) **Travel permits** required for certain restricted areas in Ladakh (see p142)

From the 17th century right until 1949, Ladakh's principal town, Leh was the hub of the bustling caravan trade (see p142) between Punjab and Central Asia, and between Kashmir and Tibet. The large **Main Bazaar** with its broad kerbs, was clearly designed to facilitate the passage of horses, donkeys and camels, and to provide room for the display and storage of merchandise.

The town is dominated by the nine-storeyed **Leh Palace**, built in the 1630s by Sengge Namgyal. A prolific builder of monasteries and forts, with many conquests to his name, he was Ladakh's most famous king. The palace's massive inward-leaning walls are in the same architectural tradition as the Potala Palace in Lhasa, which, in fact, the Leh Palace antedates by about 50 years. Sadly, the solidity of its exterior belies the disrepair inside, although some repair work is now being done. Visitors can go up to the open terrace on the level above the main entrance.

Much of Leh's charm lies in

the opportunities it offers for pleasant strolls and walks. In the heart of town are the **Main Bazaar** and **Chang Gali** with their eateries and canteen shops selling precious stones and ritual religious objects such as prayer wheels. Along the Bazaar's wide kerb, women from nearby villages

sit with large baskets of fresh vegetables, spinning wool on drop spindles and exchanging lively chatter in between intervals of brisk commerce.

The **Jokhang**, a modern ecumenical Buddhist establishment, and the town mosque, built in the late 17th century, are close to each other in

the **Main Bazaar**. Between the **Main Bazaar** and the **Polo Ground**, at the eastern end of town, is the fascinating **Old Town**, with its maze of narrow alleys dotted with *chortens* and *mani* walls (see p141), and its cluster of flat-roofed houses constructed of sunbaked bricks.

On the peak above the town are the small fort and monastery complex of **Namgyal Tsemo** (mid-16th century), believed to be the earliest royal residence in Leh. Next to its now ruined fort are a *gonkhang* (Temple of the Guardian Deities) and a temple to **Maitye** (the Future

ACCLIMATIZING TO LEH

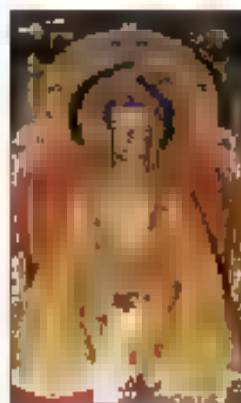
Visitors flying into Leh, situated at an altitude of 3,500 m (11 483 ft), should allow themselves enough time to acclimatize. Any strenuous physical activity should be avoided for at least the first 24 hours. During the first few days, Leh's high altitude can often cause insomnia, headaches, breathlessness and loss of appetite.

Buddha), both of which have vibrant murals. Those inside the *gonkhang* include a court scene with a portrait believed to be that of King Tashi Namgyal (mid-16th century), the founder of the complex.

At the western edge of Leh is the **Ecological Centre**, which runs development projects in agriculture, solar energy, health and environmental awareness in several of the surrounding villages. The centre also houses a library and a shop selling local handicrafts.

The gleaming white **Shanti Stupa** ("Peace Pagoda") founded in the 1980s under the sponsorship of Japanese Buddhists, is situated on a hilltop west of the city.

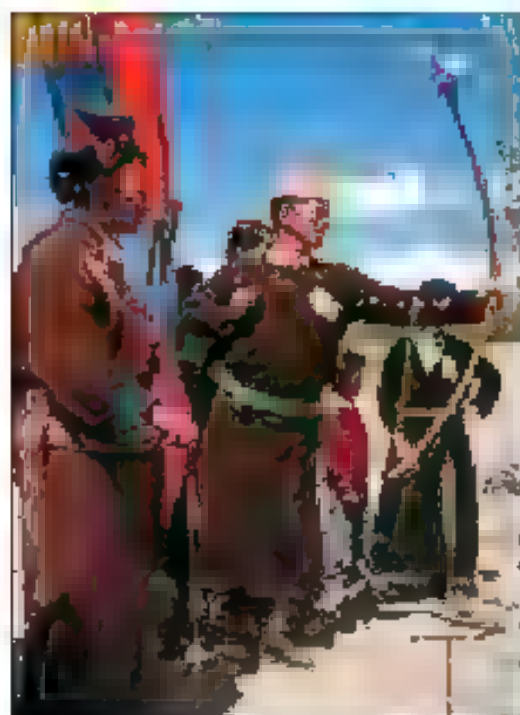
Less than ten minutes' walk in any direction away from the heart of town, will bring one



The Buddha, Leh Palace



Barley fields around Leh



An archery contest near Leh

to barley fields, green or gold according to the season. Down the hill in the village of **Skara**, the massive mud walls of the 19th-century **Zorawar Fort** catch the eye. Another lovely walk is up past the **Moravian Church** to the serene village of **Changspa** with its ancient *chorten*. From here a road turns towards the beautifully-maintained 19th-century **Sankar Monastery**, with its impressive images of Avalokitesvara and of Vajra-Bhairav, Guardian of the Gelugpa order (see p139).

Environs

Choglamsar, 7 km (4 miles) south of Leh, is the main Tibetan refugee settlement in Ladakh. It includes the Dalai Lama's prayer ground, known as Shanti Stupa, an SOS Children's Village, the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, a solar-heated hospital, and workshops that promote colourful Tibetan handicrafts.



Spitek Monastery's labyrinth of shrines linked by narrow passages

Dramatically situated on a hilltop, so close to the airport that the wings of landing aircraft come perilously close to its walls, is the 15th-century **Spitik Monastery**, the oldest establishment of the Gelugpa sect in Ladakh. It houses the library of Tsongkapa, the sect's founder, and a shrine devoted to the goddess Tara (see p141) in her myriad manifestations. Situated in one of Ladakh's most charming villages, **Phiyang Monastery** is one of only two that represent the Dzungpa sect. It was founded by

Ladakh's 16th-century ruler Tashi Namgyal, supposedly as an act of atonement for the violence and treachery by which he came to the throne. Among its many treasures is a large and interesting collection of Kashmiri bronzes of Buddhist deities, dating back to the 13th century, or possibly even earlier.

Leh Palace

☉ daily ☑ Book in advance ☑

Namgyal Tsemo

☉ daily ☑ Book in advance

Ecological Centre

☉ Mon-Fri. Tel (01982) 253 221

Jokhang

☉ daily

Sankar Monastery

☉ daily ☑

Spitik Monastery

☉ daily ☑ ☑ with permission of the lama-in-charge

Phiyang Monastery

☉ daily ☑ ☑ with permission of the lama-in-charge

FESTIVALS OF LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR

Hemis Festival (Jun/Jul)

Hemis. Of all Ladakh's monastery festivals (see p140) the one at Hemis is the most famous. This spectacular dance-drama, with colourful masks and costumes, offers a wonderfully authentic experience of Ladakhi culture.



Masked dancers performing at the Hemis Festival

Sindhu Darshan (variable)

Leh. A recent introduction, this festival is held annually as a homage to the Indus. Held on the river banks, it includes exhibitions, polo matches and archery contests.

Ladakh Festival (1-15 Sep)

Leh and Kargil. Subsidized by the Tourism Department, this is held over two weeks in Leh's Polo Grounds, as well as in Kargil and some selected villages. Apart from the traditional masked dances, the events include polo matches and archery contests, both being popular traditional sports in the region. A handicrafts exhibition is also held.

Thikse Festival (Oct/Nov)

Thikse. The annual festival of the Gelugpa sect takes place in a beautiful setting. The precise dates of monastery festivals are fixed according to the Tibetan lunar calendar and vary every year.

Milad-ul-Nabi (Apr/May)

Srinagar. The Prophet's birthday is celebrated with special fervour at the Hazratbal Mosque, when its sacred relic, a lock of the Prophet's hair, is displayed to devotees.

Monasteries Along the Indus



Maitreya in Thikse

Several of Ladakh's world famous monasteries are situated along the Indus Valley, the region's historical and cultural heartland. Typically, a Ladakhi monastery (*gompa*) stands on a hill or ridge above the village that adjoins it. Its upper part consists of temples (*lbakhang*) and assembly halls (*dukhang*), together with the *gonkhang*, the Temple of the Fearsome Guardian Deities. The monks' dwellings spill picturesquely down the hillside. The monasteries are still active centres of worship, so approach them respectfully.

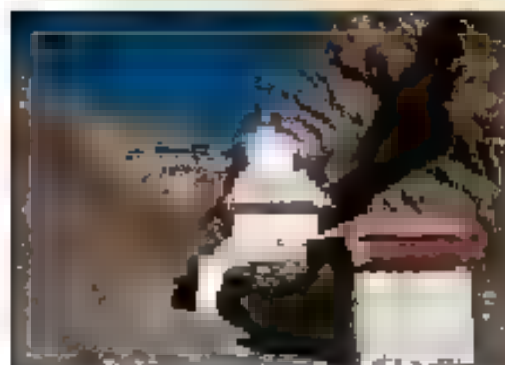
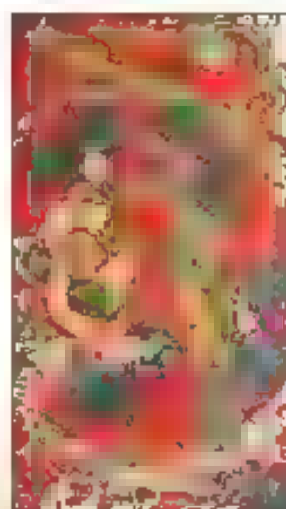


Monks dancing in the courtyard of Lamayuru Monastery



Likir founded in the 12th century, houses a fine collection of thangkas and images, the latter enclosed in beautifully carved wooden frames.

Basgo has beautiful 16th-century murals in its fort and temple dedicated to Maitreya, the Future Buddha. It was the capital of Lower Ladakh in the 14th and 15th centuries.

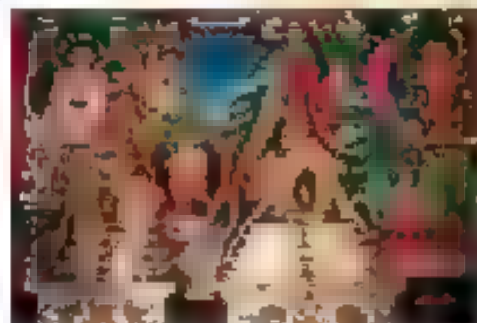


Ri-dzong is built on a tip of a ridge of glacial debris which blocks a winding gorge. Founded in the 1840s by the Gelugpa sect, its monks follow a particularly austere regime.



Lamayuru is dramatically situated on a high spur overlooking an eerily eroded landscape. Believed to date to the 11th century, its oldest temple has a famous image of Vairocana, the Central Buddha of Meditation (see p136). Lamayuru also has a fine collection of thangkas.

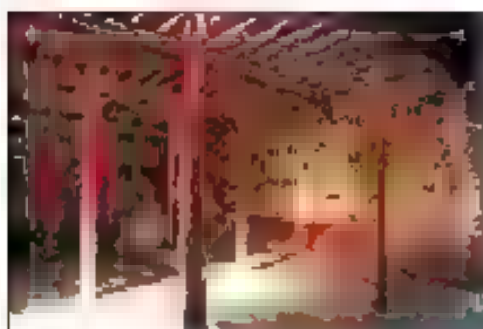
Hemis (see p140) is Ladakh's largest and richest monastery. It has superb murals and thangkas.



Stakna, built in the early 17th century, has an exquisite silver chorten in its dukhang, surrounded by vividly coloured murals.



Thikse, a 15th-century architectural gem crowning the crest of a hill, is a Gelugpa monastery, which also has a modern Maitreya temple consecrated by the Dalai Lama



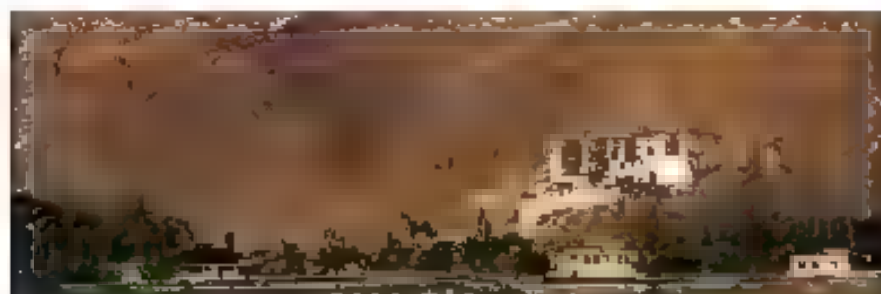
Chemrey perched on a hilltop and dating from the 16-18th centuries, houses Buddhist scriptures with silver covers and gold lettering

Thak-thok Monastery belongs to the Nyingmapa sect. It is built around a cave which Guru Padmasambhava, the 8th-century saint, is believed to have used for meditation.



KEY

- Monastery
- Road



Stok Palace, residence of Ladakh's erstwhile royal family

Stok ②

Ladakh district, 14 km (9 miles) SE of Leh Leh Tourist Office, (01982) 242 010. Stok Monastic Festival (Feb/Mar) **Stok Palace** May-Oct

The palace at Stok has been the residence of the Namgyals, the former rulers of Ladakh, since its independence in 1843. Part of the palace has been converted into a fine museum of the dynasty and its history. Its collections include a set of 35 *thangkas* (see p123) representing the life of the Buddha, said to have been commissioned by the 16th-century king, Tashi Namgyal. Images and ritual religious objects, such as the bell and *dorje* (thunderbolt), are of unsurpassed workmanship. Secular objects include fine jade cups, the queen's jewellery, including a spectacular headdress, the king's turban-shaped crown, and ceremonial robes. There is also a sword with its blade twisted into a knot, said to have been contorted by the enormous strength of Tashi Namgyal.

Shey ③

Ladakh district, 15 km (9 miles) SE of Leh Leh Tourist Office, (01982) 252 297. Shey Shrubla (1st week of Sep.) **Shey Palace** daily

Shey was the ancient capital of Ladakh. Its abandoned palace contains a temple with a gigantic, late 17th-century Buddha image, surrounded by murals of deities, painted in rich colours and gold. Another beautiful Buddha image is housed in a nearby temple. Just below the palace are huge 11th-century rock carvings of the Five Buddhas of Meditation (see p146).



A Ladakhi couple bringing their baby to be blessed at Shey

BUDDHIST SECTS IN LADAKH

Five sects of Tibetan Buddhism are represented in Ladakh. Thak-thok monastery belongs to the Nyingmapa, which is based on the teachings of the 8th-century saint, Padma sambhava (see p120), while Matho (see p140) with its oracle monks belongs to the Sakyapa. The Drugpa and Drigungpa sects are based on the teachings of a line of Indian masters from the 11th century. The lamas of all these sects wear red hats on ceremonial occasions. The lamas who wear yellow hats belong to the reformist Gelugpa sect, headed by the Dalai Lama (see p123), which exercised political control in Tibet until 1959. Apart from Thak-thok and Matho, and the two Drigungpa monasteries of Phuyang (see p137) and Lama-vuru, all Ladakh's monasteries belong to either the Drugpa or Gelugpa sects.



Monks of the Gelugpa sect chanting prayers



Dance of the Oracle at the 16th-century Matho Monastery

Matho Monastery ④

Leh district, 30 km (19 miles) SE of Leh daily Annual Matho Festival (Feb/Mar).

The only monastery in Ladakh of the Sakya sect (see p139), Matho, built in the early 16th century, is also one of the few that continues to attract many new entrants. Its main importance, however, lies in its Oracles – two monks who, after months of purification by fasting and meditation, are possessed by a deity. This event takes place during Matho's annual festival, held between February and March. The drama of the occasion is tremendous as the Oracles traverse the topmost parapet of the monastery unfolded, despite the 30-m

(98-ft) drop onto the rocks below. The Oracles answer questions put to them about public and private affairs, and great faith is reposed in their predictions. Matho also has a small museum with a rare collection of 16th-century *thangkas* and costumes.

Hemis Monastery ⑤

Leh district, 43 km (27 miles) SE of Leh daily Annual Hemis Festival (Jun).

Tucked away up a winding glen in the mountains south of the Indus, Hemis is the largest as well as the richest of the central Ladakh monasteries. It was founded in the 1630s as a Drugpa establishment by King Sengge Namgyal, and continued to be

the most favoured monastery of the Namgyal dynasty. Of its several temples, the most rewarding is the *tshe g-khang*, a secondary assembly hall which contains a fine image of the Buddha in front of a huge silver *chorten* set with flawless turquoises.

Hemis is also renowned for its spectacular annual festival, dedicated to Guru Padmasambhava, the 8th-century Indian apostle who took Buddhism to Tibet. A unique feature of this festival, which is held in the summer and attracts huge crowds, is the 12-yearly unveiling of the monastery's greatest treasure – an enormous, three-storey high *thangka* of Padmasambhava, embroidered and studded with pearls and semi-precious stones. The next unveiling of the *thangka* is due in 2016.



The giant *thangka* unfurled during the festival at Hemis Monastery

THE MONASTIC DANCE-DRAMAS OF LADAKH

The dance-dramas performed at Ladakh's annual monastery festivals are immensely popular events, constituting a link between popular and esoteric Buddhism. Attended by high lamas and novice monks in their ceremonial robes and hats, as well as by local families dressed in their splendid traditional costumes, these events are a vibrant expression of age-old cultural and religious values. The dancers, representing divine or mythological figures, wear colourful brocade robes and heavy masks as they perform ceremonial dances around the monastery courtyard. The solemnity of the occasion is lightened by comic interludes per-

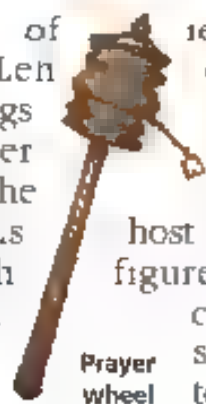
formed by dancers in skeleton costumes, who bound into the arena performing agile gymnastics, and caricaturing the solemn rites just enacted, to the delight of the assembled spectators. In the climactic scene the masked figures ritually dismember a doll moulded from barley flour dough (perhaps symbolizing the human soul) and scatter its fragments in all directions. Besides attracting large numbers of outside visitors, these monastery festivals also provide people from far-flung Ladakhi villages an eagerly awaited opportunity to meet each other and exchange news and views.



Masked dancers at a monastery festival

Buddhist Iconography

The external manifestations of Buddhism are ubiquitous in Leh district and Zaskar – prayer flags fluttering in the breeze, prayer wheels turning in the hands of the elderly, chortens and mani walls inset with stone slabs carved with the sacred invocation Om mani padme hum ("Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus"). Inside the monaster-

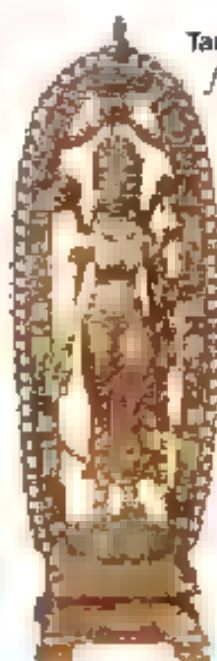


Prayer wheel

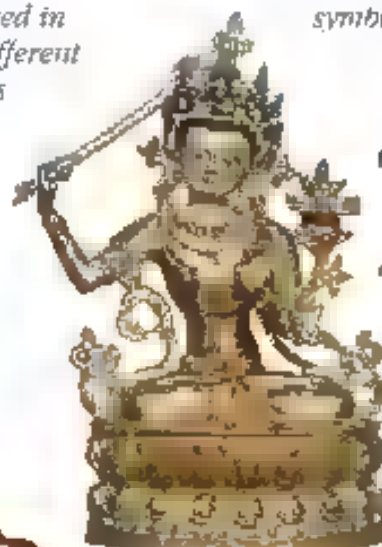
ies the iconography is more complex. Each divinity of the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon is depicted in several different manifestations, together with a host of saints, teachers and mythical figures, mandalas and a legorical compositions. Shown below are some images that are encountered most frequently

THE BODHISATTVAS

Bodhisattvas are supremely compassionate almost-Buddhas who have attained enlightenment, but are willing to forgo nirvana so that they can help others obtain liberation from the endless cycle of rebirths.

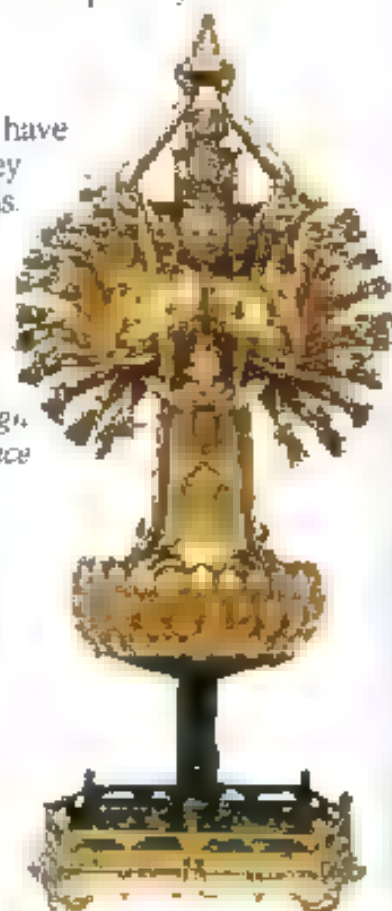


Tara is the female form of Avalokitesvara and is depicted in 21 different forms

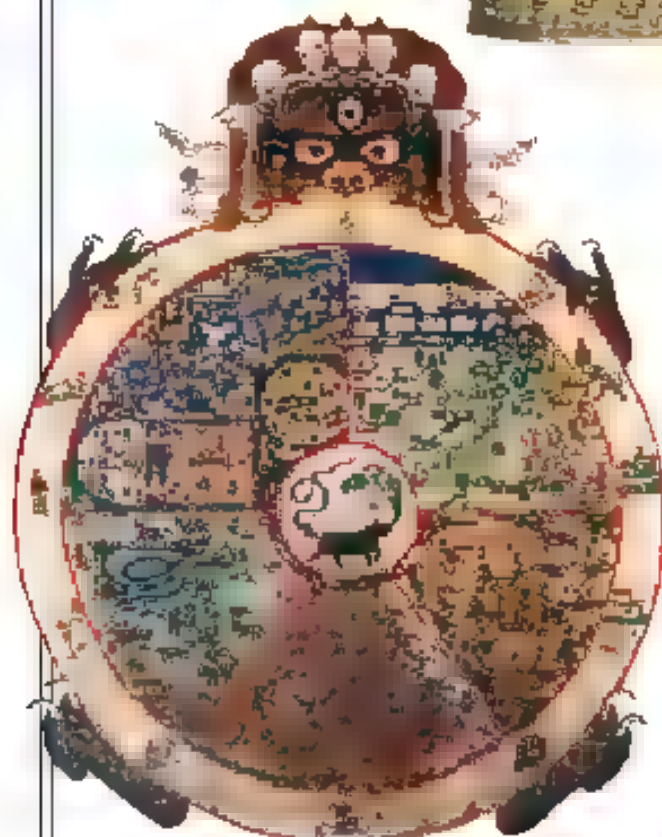


Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is often shown with 11 heads and multiple arms, symbolizing his benign omnipresence

Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, bears a flaming sword in his hand to cut through the fog of ignorance



Guardian Deities are usually represented as fierce forms, with skull beaddresses, wicked fangs and flames in place of hair. Most commonly seen is Mahakala, usually above the main door of a temple



The Wheel of Life, with animated human and animal figures on it, is mostly painted on temple verandahs. It shows the temptations and sins that make life on earth an endless misery.



The Lords of the Four Quarters guard the four cardinal directions. The Lord of the North is recognized by the banner in his right hand and a mongoose in his left hand.



Glaciers and peaks encircling the blue-green waters of Pang-gong Tso

Southeast Ladakh 6

Pang-gong Tso Leh district 150 km (93 miles) E of Leh. **Tso Moriri** Leh district 220 km (1,137 miles) SE of Leh. **H** Leh Tourist Office, (01982) 252 297. **Travel permits** required. Contact Deputy Commissioner, Leh, (01982) 252 010. Permits are granted on condition that visitors travel in groups of not less than four, with the tour organized by a registered travel agent along specific tour routes. For more details see p153.

Southeast Ladakh, on the sensitive international border with Tibet, is a region with a series of spectacularly beautiful lakes. The two major lakes, **Pang-gong Tso** and **Tso Moriri**, are accessible by road, although there are no scheduled bus services.

The biggest of the lakes is the long and narrow Pang-gong Tso. It is 130-km (81-mile) in length and lies at an altitude of 4,420 m (14,500 ft), extending far into Western Tibet. Visitors may go as far as **Spangmik** (7 km/4 miles) along the lake's southern shore, from where there are spectacular views to the north of the Chang-chenmo Range, its reflection shimmering in the

ever-changing blues and greens of the brackish water. Above Spangmik rise the glaciers and snowcapped peaks of the Pang-gong Range.

Tso Moriri (30 km/19 miles) to the south of Pang-gong Tso is a 140-sq km (54-sq mile) expanse of intensely blue water. At an altitude of 4,600 m (15,092 ft) it is set among rolling hills behind which lie snow-covered mountains. The region's only permanent settlement is on the lake's western shore.

Karzok – a handful of houses and a monastery whose barley fields must be among the highest cultivated areas anywhere in the world.

The lake and its freshwater inlets are breeding areas for many species of migratory birds, such as the rare black-

necked crane and the great crested grebe. Wild asses, marmots and foxes can also be seen in the region.

Among the human inhabitants of Southeast Ladakh are the nomadic herders, known as Chang-pa, who brave extreme cold (–40° C/–40° F in winter, and freezing nights even in summer) throughout the year, living in their black yak-hair tents. They raise yak and sheep, but their main wealth is the pashmina goat. The severe cold of winter stimulates the goats to grow an undercoat of soft warm fibre, which they shed at the beginning of summer. This fibre, known as *pashm*, is the raw material for Kashmir's renowned shawl industry and is, in fact, the unprocessed form of the world-famous cashmere wool. The lucrative trade in *pashm* from Ladakh's

high-altitude pastures as well as from Western Tibet was the motive behind Ladakh's annexation by the Maharaja of Kashmir in 1834.



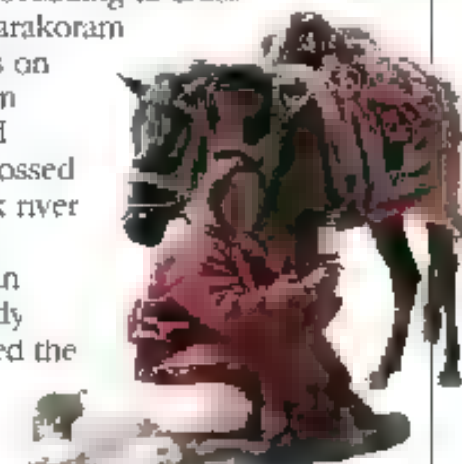
Pashmina goat

Environs

The twin lakes of **Tso Kar** and **Startsapuk Tso** are 80 km (50 miles) north of Tso Moriri, on the road to Leh. Startsapuk Tso has fresh water, but Tso Kar is so briny that the Chang-pa herders regularly collect salt from deposits near its margins.

THE CARAVAN TRADE

For centuries until 1949 Ladakh was the route for a busy trade between Punjab and Central Asia. The caravans invariably halted at Leh (see pp136–7), where a lot of business was transacted, before proceeding to cross the 5,578-m (18,301 ft) high Karakoram Pass, one of the highest points on any trade route in the world. In summer the caravans traversed Nubra, while in winter they crossed the upper valley of the Shayok river. Every year, over 10,000 pack animals – horses, yaks, Bactrian camels, and an especially sturdy breed of local sheep – traversed the Nubra region, carrying Varanasi brocades, Chinese silk, pearls, spices, Indian tea, *pashm* wool, salt, indigo, opium, carpets, and gold.



A Ladakhi horseman taking a break for prayers



Tso Moriri, a breeding ground for the great crested grebe

Nubra Valley Tour ⑦

The tour of the Nubra region starts from Leh and follows the old caravan trade route to Central Asia – a “feeder” of the famous Silk Route. It takes in the world’s highest motorable mountain pass – the Khardung-la, pretty villages with banks of wild flowers and stands of willow and poplar, valleys covered with seabuckthorn shrubs, stretches of sand dunes and double-humped Bactrian camels, remote monasteries, and medicinal hot springs.



The Karakoram Range, visible from the top of the Khardung-la



Hundar ③

The fascinating vista of sand dunes between Diskit and Hundar can be explored on the back of a Bactrian camel.



Samstangling ⑤

Overlooking the green fields of Sumur village, this 17th-century monastery has impressive images.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length. 195 km (121 miles).

Getting around: This tour takes three days. Diskit, Hundar and Panamik have guesthouses and camps, for overnight stay.

Travel permits: Visitors must obtain an Inner Line Permit from the Deputy Commissioner, Leh, (01982) 252 010, to travel in the Nubra region. Permits are granted only to groups of four or more, and should be carried all the time.

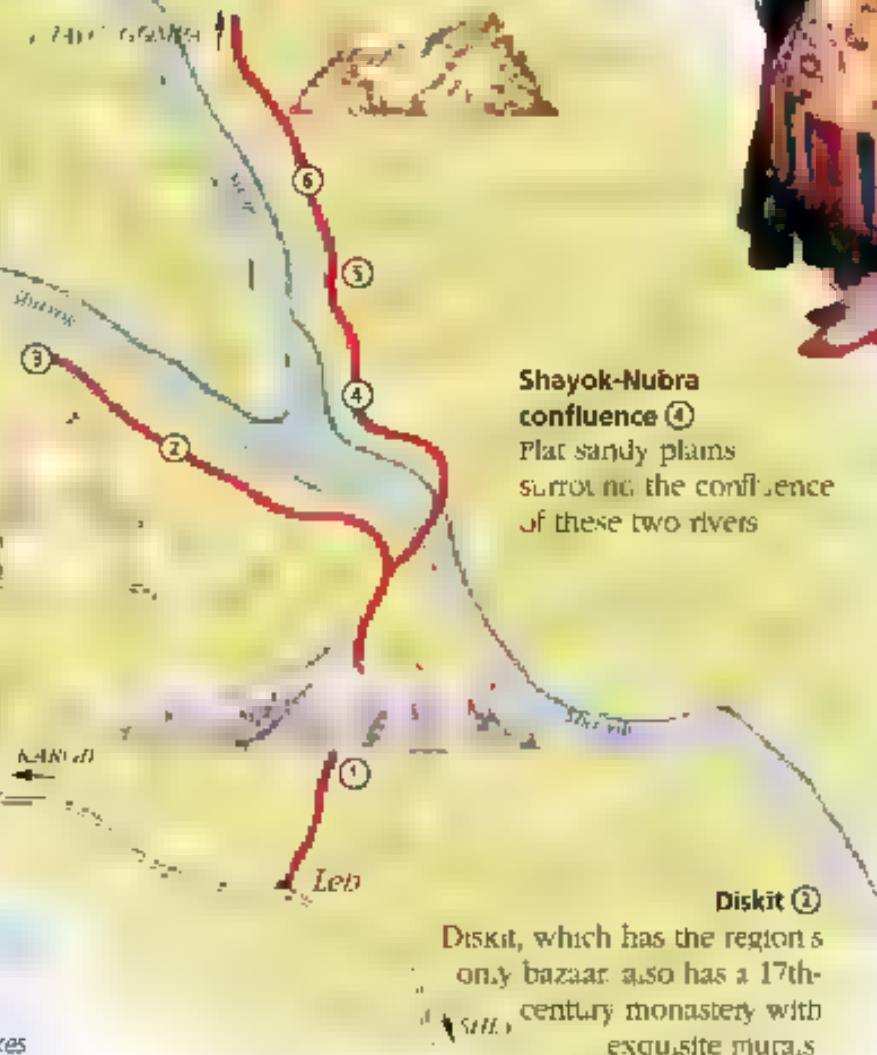
Panamik ⑥

A major halt on the caravan trade route, Panamik also has medicinal hot springs. This Panamik lady is seen in her local traditional dress.



Shayok-Nubra confluence ④

Flat sandy plains surround the confluence of these two rivers.



Diskit ②

Diskit, which has the region's only bazaar, also has a 17th-century monastery with exquisite murals.

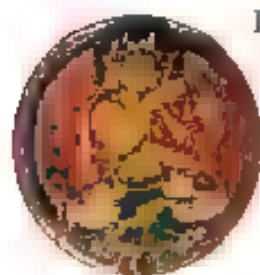
Khardung-la ①

From the top of this pass (5,578 m, 18,301 ft) there are superb views, south over the Zaskar Range and north to the towering Saser Spur of the Karakoram Range.

KEY

- Tour route
- Other road
- River

Alchi Monastery 8



Dancing deity in the Sumtsek

Founded in the early 12th century AD, the religious enclave of Alchi is the jewel among Ladakh's monasteries. Because Alchi was abandoned as a site of active worship, for reasons unknown, as early as the 16th century, the 12th and 13th-century paintings in its temples have remained remarkably well preserved, undimmed by the soot from butter lamps and incense sticks. Of the

five temples in the enclave, the finest murals are in the two oldest, the Dukhang and the Sumtsek. These have been executed with great delicacy and skill by master painters who were probably from Kashmir.



Lhakhang Soma

This painting of a Guardian Deity and his female counterpart symbolizes the union of opposites.



Avalokitesvara

The legs of this gigantic statue in the Sumtsek are covered with exquisite miniature paintings of palaces and Buddhist pilgrimage sites.



★ Sumtsek

The carved wooden façade of this temple is in the style of Kashmiri temple architecture.



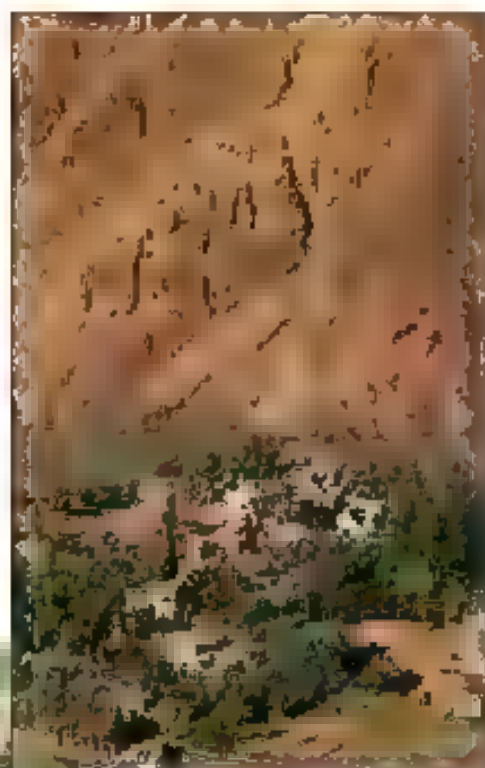
Green Tara or Prajnaparamita

GREEN TARA

There are several exquisite images of this goddess, variously identified as Green Tara, the Saviour, and Prajnaparamita (the Perfection of Wisdom) in the Sumtsek. Five of them are to the left of the gigantic Avalokitesvara statue, opposite his leg. The Green Tara seems to have held a special place in Alchi, since the goddess is not given such importance in other monasteries.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Sumtsek
- ★ Dukhang



View of Alchi

Idyllically located on a bend in the Indus river Alchi's simple white-washed buildings with their band of deep red trim stand out against an impressive backdrop of barren mountains

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Leh district 70 km (44 miles) W of Leh on the Leh-Kargil Highway

☎ Leh Tourist Office, (01982) 252 297 ☐ daily 📺 📶

Book ahead for a guide from Leh. Alchi village has accommodation as well as restaurants with toilet facilities.



★ Dukhang

The serene image of the Vairocana Buddha (see p146) is surrounded by elaborate woodwork, decorative friezes and superb mandalas

Chortens containing holy relics are dotted around the complex. They are often built in memory of a great lama.

Lotsawa Lhakhang



King and Queen

This mural in the Dukhang shows details of royal dress and hairstyles



Rinchen Zangpo

This rare portrait of Rinchen Zangpo (see p119), an influential Tibetan saint known as the Great Translator, is in the 12th-century Lotsawa ("Translator") Lhakhang

Manjushri Lhakhang
One of the five temples, contains a large image of Manjushri (see p141)

Entrance

Exploring Alchi Monastery

Unknown to the outside world until 1974, when Ladakh was opened up to tourists, Alchi is now one of Ladakh's major attractions, renowned as a great centre of Buddhist art. It was built as a monument to the Second Spreading – the revival of Buddhism that took place in Tibet in the 11th century, on the basis of religious texts brought from Kashmir. The entire Mahayana Buddhist pantheon of deities is represented within its five temples, together with superb paintings of court life, battles and pilgrimages, depicting the costumes, architecture and customs of the time.

The assembly hall, known as **Dukhang**, is the oldest of the five temples and holds some of Alchi's greatest treasures.

The central image of Vairocana, the main Buddha of Meditation, is surrounded by a wooden frame exuberantly carved with dancers, musicians, elephants and mythical animals. It is flanked by four other Buddhas of Meditation. Even more impressive are the six

elaborate mandalas painted on the walls, together with small scenes of contemporary life. The space between the mandalas is filled with fine decorative details that have an unexpectedly Rococo look about them.

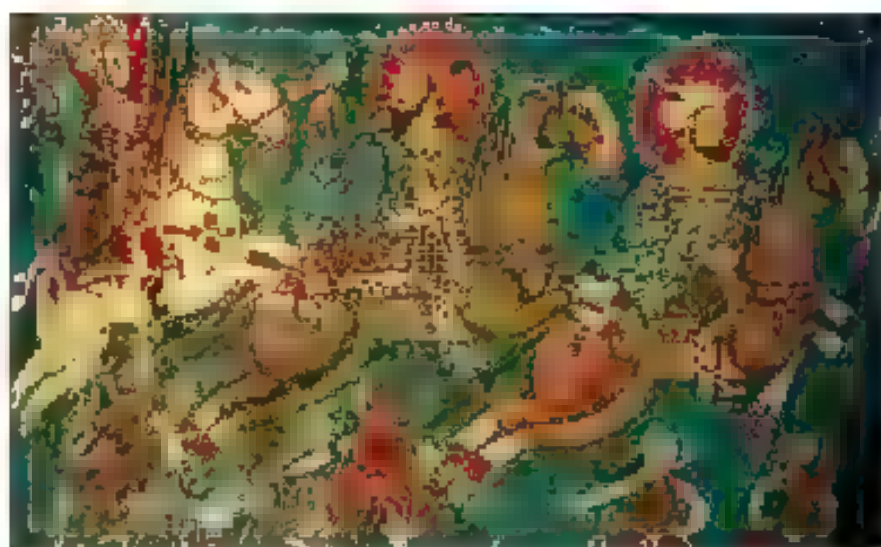
In the three-storeyed **Sumtsek**, the second-oldest temple, are spectacular images and paintings. The temple's most unique features are the gigantic images of



One of the many prayer rooms in Alchi Monastery

Avalokitesvara, Manjushri (see p141) and Maitreya, that stand in alcoves in three of its walls. Only their legs and torsos are visible from the ground floor, while their heads protrude into the upper storey. From waist to knee they are draped in dhoti-like garments, covered with remarkably animated and sophisticated miniature paintings. It is advisable to take a torch to examine their incredible detail. The Avalokitesvara image is covered with shrines, palaces, and vignettes of contemporary life. The Maitreya image has scenes from the Buddha's life painted within roundels, and the Manjushri image depicts the 84 Masters of the Tantra.

The three other temples probably date from the late 12th to early 13th centuries and though they would win acclaim in any other setting they fade in comparison with the Dukhang and the Sumtsek. The **Manjushri Lhakhang** has murals of the Thousand Buddhas and an enormous, recently-repainted image of Manjushri. The **Lotsawa Lhakhang** has rather more austere paintings and images. It is dedicated to the saint Rinchen Zangpo, who was also closely associated with the Thikse (see p139) and Tabo (see p131) monasteries. The **Lhakhang Soma**, the last temple to be built at Alchi, has a profusion of fierce-looking deities on its walls, and scenes showing the Buddha preaching.



Riders, Central Asian in appearance, on the Avalokitesvara image

THE FIVE BUDDHAS OF MEDITATION

Buddhism in the 12th century laid emphasis on the Five Dhyani Buddhas or Buddhas of Meditation, who feature in several mandalas in Alchi. Each of these Buddhas is associated with a direction and a colour: Vairocana (the Resplendent) is associated with the centre and the colour white; Amitayus (the Boundless Light) with the west and the colour red; Aksobhya (the Imperturbable, with the east and the colour blue; Amoghasiddhi (Infallible Success) with the north and the colour green; and Ratnasambhava (the Jewel-Born) with the south and the colour yellow. The Five Buddhas of Meditation symbolize the different aspects of the Buddha, and the mandalas help devotees to meditate on them.

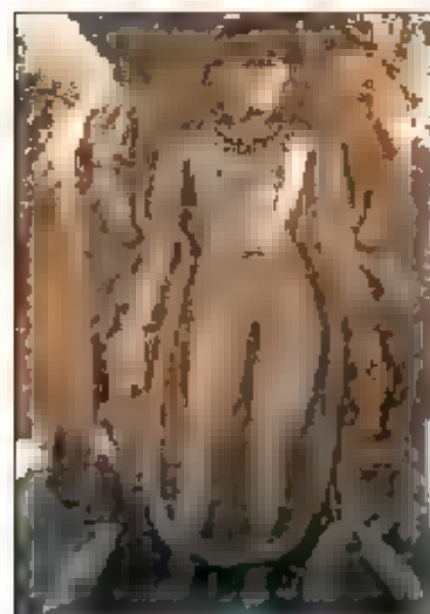


Mandala with the Five Dhyani Buddhas

Mulbekh 9




Kargil district 190 km (118 miles)
NW of Leh   Kargil Tourist
Office, (01985, 232 721

A pretty village in the Kargil district, Mulbekh, spread over the broad green valley of the Wakha river, is the point at which the proselytizing tide of Islam, spreading towards central Ladakh, lost its impetus. As a consequence, Mulbekh has a mixed population of Buddhists and Muslims, and supports a mosque as well as a monastery perched on a crag above the village. Its main attraction, however, is a giant engraving of Maitreya, the Future Buddha, on a huge free-standing rock by the roadside. It is believed to date back to the 8th century.

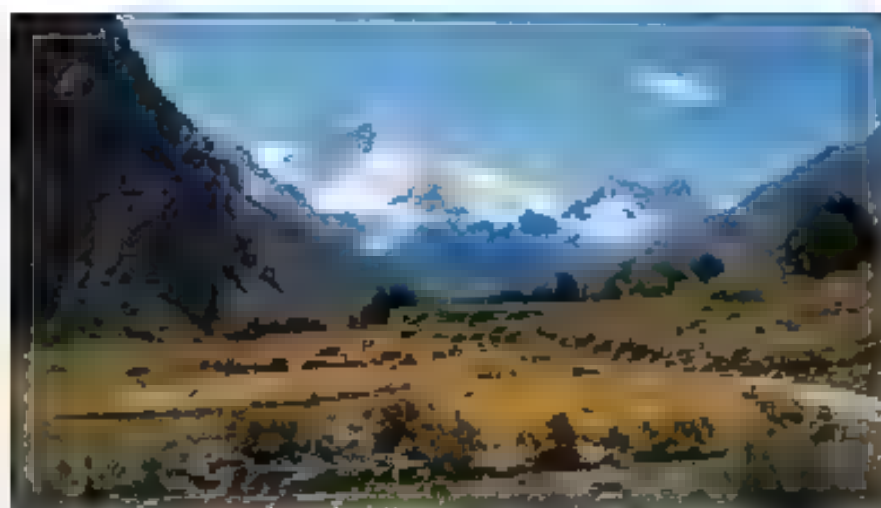


The 8-m (26-ft) high Maitreya Buddha at Mulbekh

Kargil 10

Kargil district 230 km (143 miles) NW of Leh and NE of Srinagar.   Kargil Tourist Office, (01985, 232 721)  Muharram (Mar/Apr), Ladakh Festival (Sep) **Travel permits** are required for the Dha-Hanu region, available at Leh (see p142).

For travellers between Leh and Srinagar, Kargil town is a good place to stop for the night. The second largest urban centre in Ladakh, Kargil was an important trading centre before the Partition of India, when the road to Skardu in Baluchistan (Pakistan) was still open. The majority of Kargil's population are Shia




View of the Nun-kun massif from Suru Valley

Muslims, an Islamic sect that regards Muhammad's cousin Ali and his successors as the true imams.

Kargil apricots are famous and its hillside orchards are an enchanting sight in May when the trees are in bloom, and in July when the fruit is ripe. The town is also the base for expeditions to the Suru Valley, Zaskar and Nun-kun. Kargil suffered shelling during the conflict between India and Pakistan in 1999, so check the situation before a visit there.

Suru Valley 11

Kargil district 19 km (12 miles) S of Kargil  to Sankhu

The Suru Valley starts from Kargil and runs 100 km (62 miles) to the southeast. One of Ladakh's loveliest and most fertile regions, it boasts rolling alpine pastures, mud-walled villages and views of majestic snowcapped peaks. Abundant water from melting

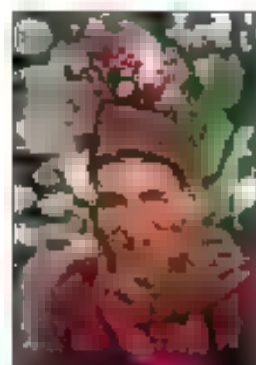
snows gives the Suru Valley rich harvests of barley and plantations of willow and poplar, especially around Sankhu village. Close to Sankhu are the ruins of ancient forts, together with rock engravings of Maitreya and Avalokitesvara from the valley's pre-Islamic past. The upper valley is dominated by the peaks, ridges and glaciers of the Nun-kun massif which is 7,135 m (23,409 ft) high. Expeditions to the mountain take off from the picturesque village of Panikhar, whose pastures are covered with alpine flowers in June and July.



Prehistoric rock paintings in the Suru Valley

THE DARDS

A conspicuous sight in the bazaars of Kargil and Leh are the Dards, in their colourful caps adorned with flowers. Their aquiline features and fair complexions set them apart from other Ladakhis, as do their customs and traditions. There are several theories about the origins of this small community – among others, that they are the descendants of Alexander the Great's soldiers. Anthropological research, however, indicates that their ancestors migrated from Gilgit in Pakistan before it came under the influence of Islam. There are Dard villages at Dha-Hanu, east of Kargil on the Indus, close to where the river leaves Ladakh for Baluchistan (Pakistan).



A Dard in his distinctive cap








Rangdum 12

Kargil district 110 km (68 miles) SE of Kargil   *Kargil Tourist Office, (01985, 232 721*

The village of Rangdum serves as a night halt between Kargil (see p147) and Zaskar. Though geographically part of the Suru Valley, its largely Buddhist population and its monastery orient it culturally towards Zaskar. Situated on a wide flat plateau at 3,800 m (12,467 ft), crisscrossed by water courses, and framed by snow peaks and hills of curiously striated rock, Rangdum has a wild, desolate beauty. The fortress-like 18th-century **Gelugpa Monastery** is built on a yillock, and a small temple in the complex has a fine wall painting of a battle scene, with warriors sporting Mongolian-looking armour and battledress.

Zaskar 13

Kargil district 230 km (143 miles) SE from Kargil to Padum.  to Padum.  *Padum Tourist Office, (01983, 254 017*  *Karsha Monastery Festival (Jul/Aug).*

There is a certain mystique about Zaskar. This is no doubt due to its remoteness and altitude, between 3,350 m (10,991 ft) and 4,400 m (14,436 ft) and the fact that the region is difficult to access – the only motorable road into the valley is usually open from around early June to mid-October. But Zaskar's reputation as a Shangri-la also

derives from the grandeur of its landscapes, the simplicity of life in its villages, and the serene ambience in its *gompas* often built around ancient cliff-top meditation caves.

Zaskar contains the valleys of two rivers, the Stod and the Lungnak which flowing towards each other along the northern flank of the Greater Himalayas join to become the Zaskar river. This continues north through a gorge in the Zaskar Range, to join the Indus.

The western arm of Zaskar – the Stod Valley, and its central plain are fertile and well-watered – villages form green pockets and the virtual absence of trees contributes to an extraordinary sense of light and space. The inhabitants of this region are mostly agricultural farmers, growing barley, wheat and peas in the lower villages, and raising livestock – yaks, sheep and *dzos* (a hybrid between cows and yaks) – in the higher villages. In winter, many of these farmers take the only route out of the area, trekking for six gruelling days across the frozen Zaskar river, to sell their highly prized yak butter in Leh. In contrast



The Zaskar river, running through a gorge

to the fertile western arm and central plain, the eastern arm of Zaskar – the Lungnak valley – is a forbidding and stony gorge, with few

villages to be found in the vicinity.

The main gateway to Zaskar is the **Pensi-la** (4,400 m/14,436 ft), about 130 km (81 miles) southeast of Kargil.

There are spectacular views from the top of this pass, especially of the impressive **Drang-drung Glacier**, which is the origin of the Stod river. The road

then continues down to **Padum**, 230 km (143 miles) southeast of Kargil, at an altitude of 3,500 m (11,483 ft). Padum is Zaskar's main village and administrative headquarters. This is the only place in the region with basic facilities including accommodation, transport and a few rudimentary shops. It is also the starting point for a number of treks in the region (see pp152–3). Padum itself has few sites of interest, except for a rock engraving of the Five Dhyani Buddhas (see p146) in the centre of the village. A new mosque serves Padum's small community of Muslims. There are a number of interesting sites to explore in the vicinity. Within easy reach



Perak, the traditional female headdress



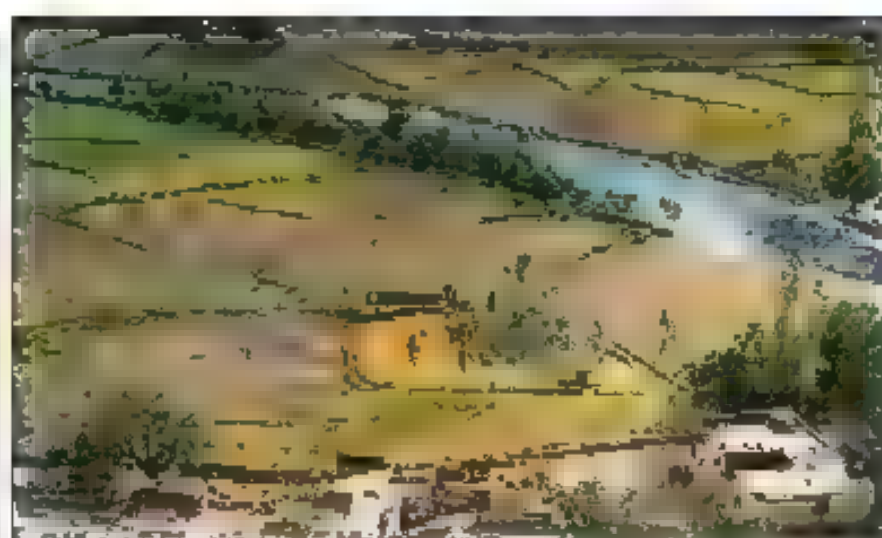
Stucco decoration and images in bas-relief at Sani Gompa, Zaskar

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp694–5 and pp723–4

on foot, is the village of **Pipiting** which has a temple and *chorten* on top of a mound of glacier debris, and a pavilion which was specially constructed for the Dalai Lama's prayer assemblies.

A short distance away is **Sani**, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Padum, one of the oldest religious sites in the Western Himalayas. Within the monastery walls stands the Kanika Chorten, its name possibly linking it to the Kushana ruler Kanishka (see p43) whose empire stretched from Afghanistan to Varanasi in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The monastery itself is said to have been founded by Padmasambhava (see p120) in the 8th century, and its main temple has some fine murals. Even more interesting is another small temple in the complex, which has unique, beautifully painted stucco bas-relief decorations and niches in the walls for images. Sani is surrounded by a stand of poplars, conspicuous in this otherwise treeless landscape.

Visible from Padum, the buildings of the Gelugpa monastery of **Karsha**, 10 km (6 miles) northeast of Padum, seem to spill down the mountainside west of the main valley. Until they merge with the houses and fields of the village. This site includes ancient rock engravings, and the murals in its Avalokitesvara temple, just outside the main complex, seem to put it in the same period as Alchi (see pp144-6). Tradition, however,



Fertile fields of barley and wheat in the Stod Valley in Zaskar

attributes the monastery's foundation to the ubiquitous Padmasambhava. Karsha has a large community of resident monks, and holds its colourfully annual festival between July and August.

Stongde, on the opposite side of the valley, 12 km (7 miles) from Padum, is perched on a ridge, high above the mosaic of the village's fields. Believed to have been founded in the 11th century, it houses no fewer than seven well-maintained temples, some of them containing exquisite murals.

The villages of Sani, Karsha and Stongde are connected by motor transport, though the monasteries in the **Lungnak Valley** are less accessible. The narrow footpath leading up the valley winds along unstable scree slopes high above the river, and the walk is strenuous. It takes a sharp

climb on foot or on horseback to reach **Bardhan** and **Phugtal** monasteries.

Bardhan, 9 km (6 miles) southeast of Padum, is spectacularly located atop a crag jutting out from the mountain and rising some 100 m (328 ft) sheer out of the river. It

has fine wall paintings dating back to the time of the monastery's foundation in the early 17th century. Of all Ladakh's many monasteries, however, none, not even Bardhan or Lamayuru, can rival



Mandala, Bardhan Monastery

Phugtal, 60 km (37 miles) southeast of Padum, for the grandeur and drama of its location. Its main temples are constructed inside a huge cave on the mountainside above the Tsarap river, at a point where the drop to the water is almost sheer. Yet, below the temples the monks' dwellings have somehow been built on or into the cliff-face, and the whole improbable complex is linked by a crazy system of ladders and walkways. There is no record of Phugtal monastery's foundation, but the style of its paintings, some of them quite striking, link it with the Tabo monastery in Spiti (see p131) and the traditions established by the Tibetan saint Rinchen Zangpo (see p119) in the 11th century. Its monks belong to the Gelugpa order.

▲ Sani, Karsha, Stongde, Bardhan and Phugtal Monasteries

☐ daily ☐



Phugtal Monastery, built into a sheer cliff-face

Trekking in Ladakh and Zaskar



Black-necked crane

Trekking in the arid, extremely cold trans-Himalayan desert of Ladakh and Zaskar very often at altitudes that exceed 5,000 m (16,404 ft), can be a uniquely exhilarating experience. The terrain, as starkly beautiful as any highland setting in the world, has a number of trails many of which trace ancient trading routes to Central Asia. They lead past spectacularly located monasteries, remote passes, sometimes staggeringly high, deep river gorges and lush meadows scattered with *mani* walls and *chortens*. The best time to trek is between June and September when the land is not snowbound and the terraced fields are being harvested.

Likir to Tingmosgang is an easy two-day 22-km (14-mile) path, past a number of villages at 4,000 m (13,123 ft).

From Lamayuru, a tough five-day 65-km (40-mile) trek, via Konki-la at 4,905 m (16,093 ft), ends at Acha (see pp144-5).

Padum to Lamayuru

This 160-km (99-mile) path follows the Zaskar river via Karsha, past the impressive Lingshet Monastery and Singe-la ("Lion Pass"), ending at Lamayuru. A slightly easier route past Zangla, joins the main trail at Yelchang village.

Duration: 10 days

Altitude: 5,000 m (16,404 ft)

Level of difficulty: tough

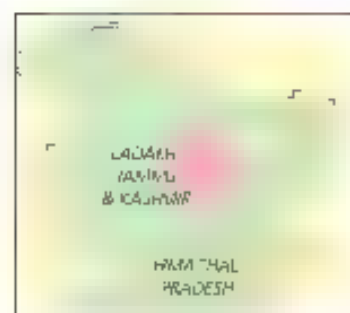
Padum to Darcha

The 115-km (71-mile) path goes from Zaskar into Himachal Pradesh along the beautiful Tsarap river, past Phugtal Monastery and Kurgiakb. Zaskar's highest range at 4,100 m (13,451 ft).

Duration: 10 days

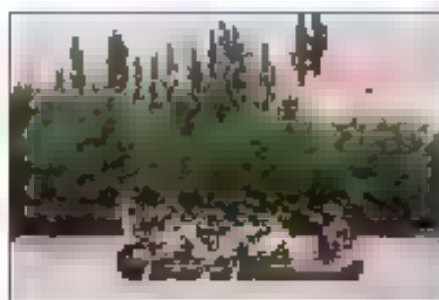
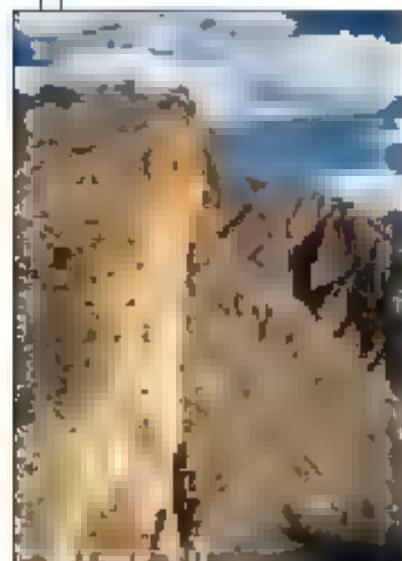
Altitude: 5,100 m (16,732 ft)

Level of difficulty: moderate



LOCATOR MAP

Area shown below



Rafting down the Indus river on rubber dinghies, a popular sport

OTHER OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

White-water rafting on the Indus and Zaskar rivers, is a popular activity from July to mid-September. There are various options to consider on the Indus river from calm "float trips" between Hemis and Choglamsar to longer stints between Spituk and Alchi. **Jeep safaris** to the lakes of Tso Kar and Tso Moriri and back take three days, with tents pitched near Karzok village. The region's rich wildlife include bar-headed geese, black-necked cranes and the *kiang* (Tibetan wild ass).





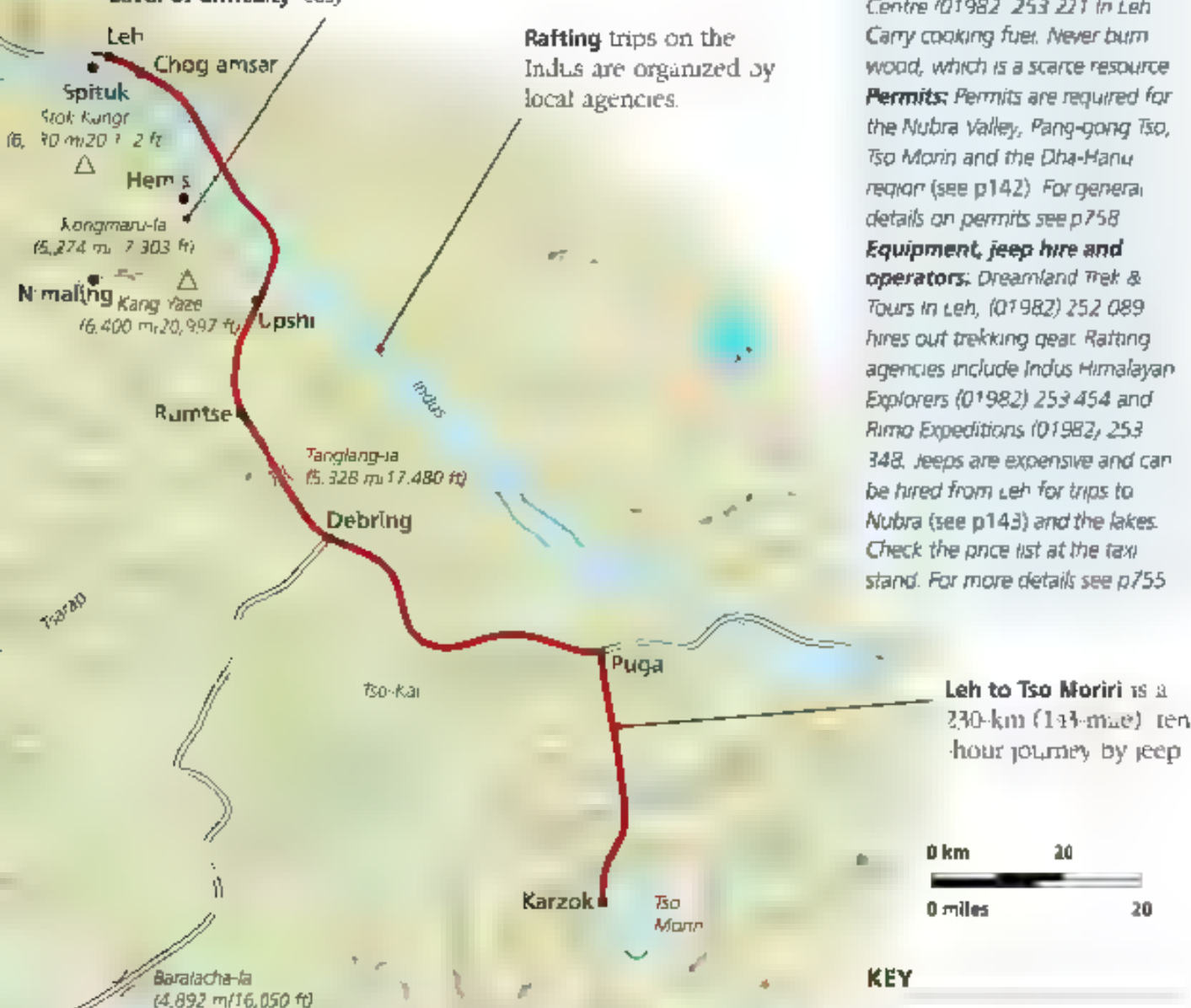
Spituk to Hemis

Ladakh's most popular trek: this 105-km (65-mile) path runs along the Indus river through Markha Valley, past Skiu village and the high pass of Kongmaru, and ends at Hemis Monastery (see p140)

Duration: 8 days

Altitude: 5,274 m (17,303 ft)

Level of difficulty: easy

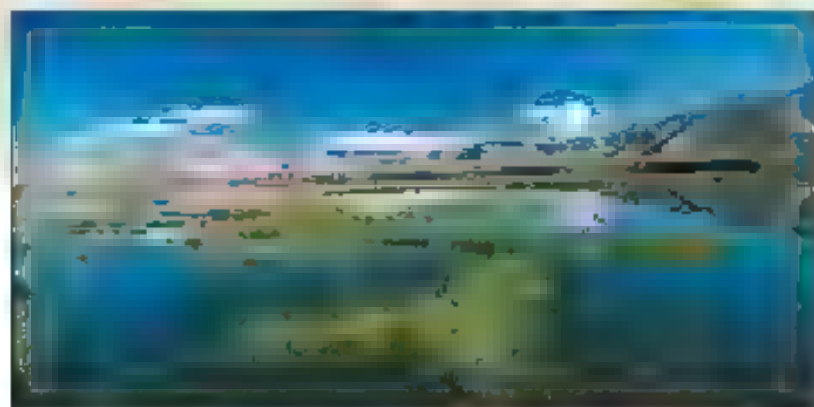


PRACTICAL TIPS

Be prepared: Most of the walking is hard, and it is imperative to be well acclimatized to the altitude, as even the bottoms of river gorges are 3,000 m (9,843 ft) above sea level. For tips on altitude sickness, see p767. Guides and ponies are essential for all treks in the region. Maps are insufficient, so don't wander off on your own as it could prove fatal. For more details on trekking see p751.

On the trek: Drink plenty of water. Do not litter, carry all rubbish back with you. Plastics can be taken to the Ecology Centre (01982 253 221) in Leh. Carry cooking fuel. Never burn wood, which is a scarce resource. **Permits:** Permits are required for the Nubra Valley, Pang-gong Tso, Tso Moriri and the Dha-Hanu region (see p142). For general details on permits see p758.

Equipment, jeep hire and operators: Dreamland Trek & Tours in Leh, (01982) 252 089 hires out trekking gear. Rafting agencies include Indus Himalayan Explorers (01982) 253 454 and Rimo Expeditions (01982) 253 348. Jeeps are expensive and can be hired from Leh for trips to Nubra (see p143) and the lakes. Check the price list at the taxi stand. For more details see p755.



Tso Kar or "White Lake", lying northwest of Tso Moriri



Srinagar's 14th-century Shah Hamadan Mosque, made entirely of wood

Jammu 14

Jammu district: 500 km (311 miles)
NW of Delhi: 378,400 8 km
(5 miles) SW of city centre
J&K Tourism, Vir Marg, (0191 254
8172) Lohri (13 Jan), Jammu
Festival (Apr), Navratri (Sep/Oct)

The winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, Jammu is located on a bluff of the Shivalik Range, overlooking the northern plains. The main site of interest is the **Amar Mahal**, once the residence of the maharajas, and today a museum with artifacts relating to the region's culture and history. Jammu is also the base for the pilgrimage to the cave shrine of the goddess **Vaishno Devi** in the Trikuta mountains, 50 km (31 miles) away. The shrine attracts four million Hindus every year.

Amar Mahal Museum
Off Srinagar Rd. Tue–Sun

Srinagar 15

Srinagar district: 700 km (435 miles),
NW of Delhi: 895,000 8 km
(5 miles) S of city centre
J&K Tourism, (0194 245 2690) Milad-ul-Nabi (May)

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, is a city of lakes and waterways, gardens and picturesque wooden architecture. The old quarters of the city sprawl over both sides of the Jhelum river, crossed by seven bridges. Although the bridges have their own names (such as

Amira Kadal and Zaina Kadal), they are also known by their numbers; an Eighth Bridge, built more recently (in the 20th century) above First Bridge, is known with typical Kashmiri wit as Zero Bridge. This serves the modern part of the city, built in the late 19th century. At the city's edge are the idyllic **Dal** and **Nagin Lakes**, linked by a network of backwaters. Srinagar's mosques and shrines are among the city's most attractive features. Typically, these are built of wood,

intricately carved in geometric patterns, and instead of a dome they are surmounted by a pagoda-like steeple. The most striking examples are the **Mosque of Shah Hamadan** in the old city, and the **Shah Makhdum Sahib Shrine** on the slopes of Har Parbat hill. Two conventional stone mosques, the **Patthar Mosque** and the **Mosque of**



Chinar leaves in autumn colours

The Mughal emperors delighted in Kashmir's beauty and further enhanced it by introducing the stately **chinar tree** (*Platanus orientalis*) to the Kashmir Valley. They also created terraced hillside gardens designed around fountains and water-courses, which were

formed by channeling water from natural springs or streams.

Of the 777 Mughal gardens that reportedly once graced the Kashmir Valley, not many survive. There are three, however, within easy reach of Srinagar, on the eastern shore of the Dal Lake – **Chashmashahi**, **Nishat** and **Shalimar Gardens**. Above

CAUTION

At present, it is not advisable to visit Jammu and Kashmir due to continued unrest. In recent years, terrorist activity by militant groups in the area has included bomb blasts, kidnappings and sniper fire. Foreign tourists are sometimes specially targeted.

Akhund Mulla Shah, both beautifully proportioned structures, date from the 17th century. In an altogether different style is the **Hazratbal Mosque**, with its dazzling white dome and single slender minaret. Rebuilt in the Saracenic style after a fire in the 1960s, it contains Kashmir's most sacred relic, a hair from the beard of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Mughal emperors delighted in Kashmir's beauty and further enhanced

it by introducing the stately **chinar tree** (*Platanus orientalis*) to the Kashmir Valley. They also created terraced hillside gardens designed around fountains and water-courses, which were

formed by channeling water from natural springs or streams.

Of the 777 Mughal gardens that reportedly once graced the Kashmir Valley, not many survive. There are three, however, within easy reach of Srinagar, on the eastern shore of the Dal Lake – **Chashmashahi**, **Nishat** and **Shalimar Gardens**. Above



The impressive ruins of the 8th-century Sun Temple at Martand



A house in Gulmarg, one of India's few ski resorts

the pretty Chashmashahi Garden, and rising tier upon tier on the mountainside, are the ruins of a 17th-century religious college. Built by a Mughal prince for his teacher, it is somewhat incongruously known as **Pari Mahal** or "Palace of the Fairies". From this vantage point, there are heart-stopping views of Dal Lake and the snowy ridge of the Pir Panjal Range.

Environs

Vestiges of Kashmir's pre-Islamic past can be seen in the ruins of magnificent Hindu temples at **Avantipora**, 28 km (17 miles) southeast of Srinagar, and **Martand**, 60 km (37 miles) southeast of Srinagar. The Sun Temple at Martand is believed to date from the 8th century AD, while the two Avantipora temples are probably from the 9th century AD. Built with great limestone blocks fitted together without mortar, these temples bear witness to the astonishing degree of technical expertise that prevailed in the early medieval period.

Chashmashahi Garden

☐ daily

Nishat and Shalimar Gardens

☐ daily

Gulmarg 16

Srinagar district, 58 km (36 miles) W of Srinagar. J&K Tourism, Gulmarg Tourist Office, (01954) 254 439

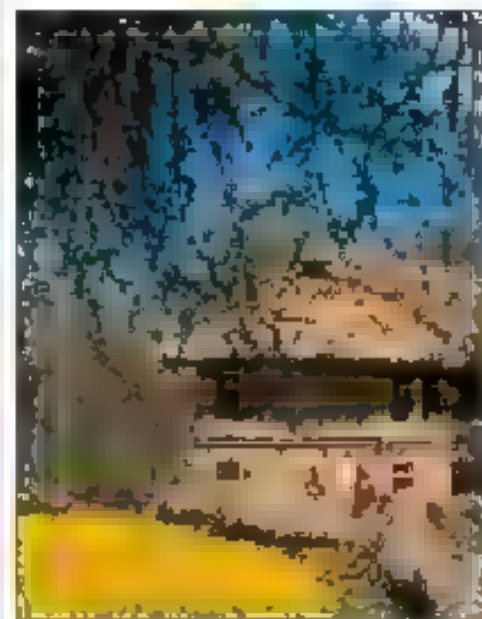
Gulmarg, or the "Meadow of Flowers", at an altitude of 2,730 m (8,950 ft), was developed by the British around a meadow on the northern flank of the Pir Panjal Range. The central bowl has been laid out as a golf course, one of the highest in the world. Around it are fairy-tale cottages with pine forests behind them. Gulmarg, together with **Khilanmarg** some 300 m (984 ft) higher up in the mountains, is among India's few ski resorts. Its facilities, catering to all levels of proficiency, also include beginner courses.

Pahalgam 17

Srinagar district, 96 km (60 miles) E of Srinagar. J&K Tourism, Pahalgam Tourist Office, (01936) 243 224

In the valley of the Lidder river, Pahalgam is on the southern slope of the Great Himalayas. It is the base for several treks to Kashmir and the Suru Valley (see p147), and for the pilgrimage to the holy cave of **Amarnath**, the destination of several thousand Hindu pilgrims, every August.

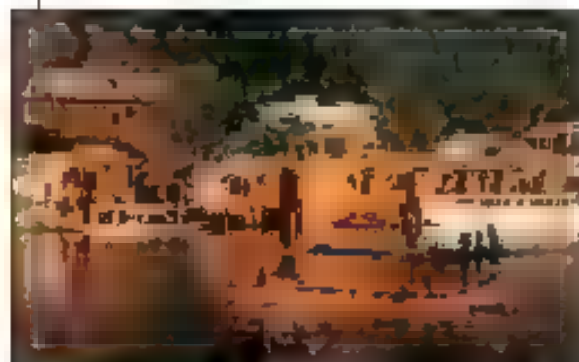
Pahalgam, dotted with mustard fields, also offers trout fishing, golf and short expeditions into the nearby mountains. The road from Srinagar to Pahalgam passes by **Pampore**, famous for its fields of saffron (*Crocus sativus*), which has been cultivated in Kashmir since the 10th century. The saffron flower blooms in late autumn.



Mustard fields surrounding a farmhouse in Pahalgam

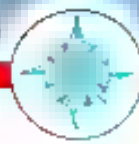
HOUSEBOATS AND SHIKARAS

In the 19th century, some of Srinagar's boat-dwelling community started building luxury versions of their own homes to cater to visitors. These houseboats, which remain moored in one place, have become the favoured accommodation for most visitors. Those in the deluxe class are astonishingly elaborate: their plush living rooms and bedrooms a showcase for the celebrated Kashmiri handicrafts—exquisite woodcarving, embroidery, carpets and papier maché. Mobility between houseboat and shore is ensured by a *shikara*, a skiff propelled by a boatman with a heart-shaped paddle. Whether luxuriating in the comfort of a houseboat or accommodated more prosaically in a hotel on dry land, there can be no more idyllic way to spend a day in Srinagar than reclining on the cushions of a *shikara* in the shade of its awning, cruising the city's lakes and backwaters.



Houseboats and shikaras on Dal Lake





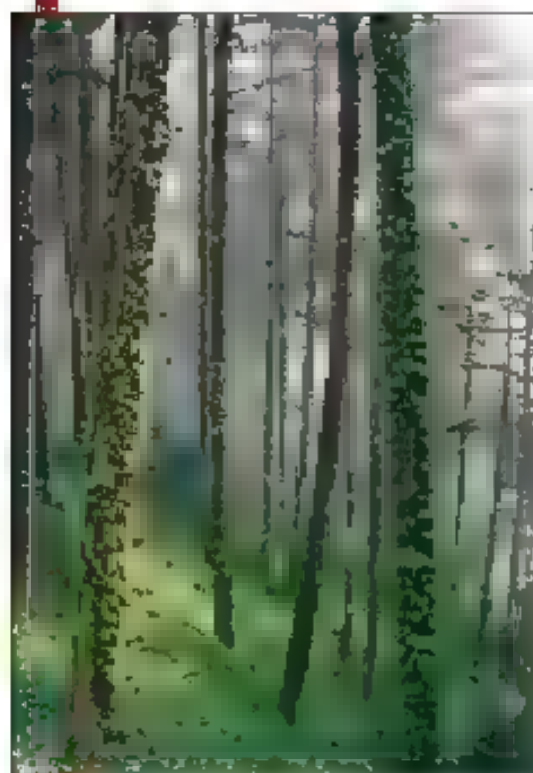
CENTRAL INDIA



INTRODUCING CENTRAL INDIA	158	165
UTTAR PRADESH & UTTARANCHAL	166	211
BIHAR & JHARKHAND	212	225
MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH	226	255

Introducing Central India

Some of India's most visited destinations are in this vast and varied region, which covers the flat Gangetic Plains, several Himalayan ranges and the verdant forests of the Central Indian heartland. These include the Taj Mahal at Agra, the holy city of Varanasi, the exquisitely sculpted temples of Khajuraho, and the great Buddhist sites of Sanchi and Bodh Gaya. Other attractions in Central India include the game sanctuaries of Kanha and Corbett, the medieval forts and palaces of Gwalior and Orchha, and the hill stations of Mussoorie, Nainital and Ranikhet, which are the base for many treks.

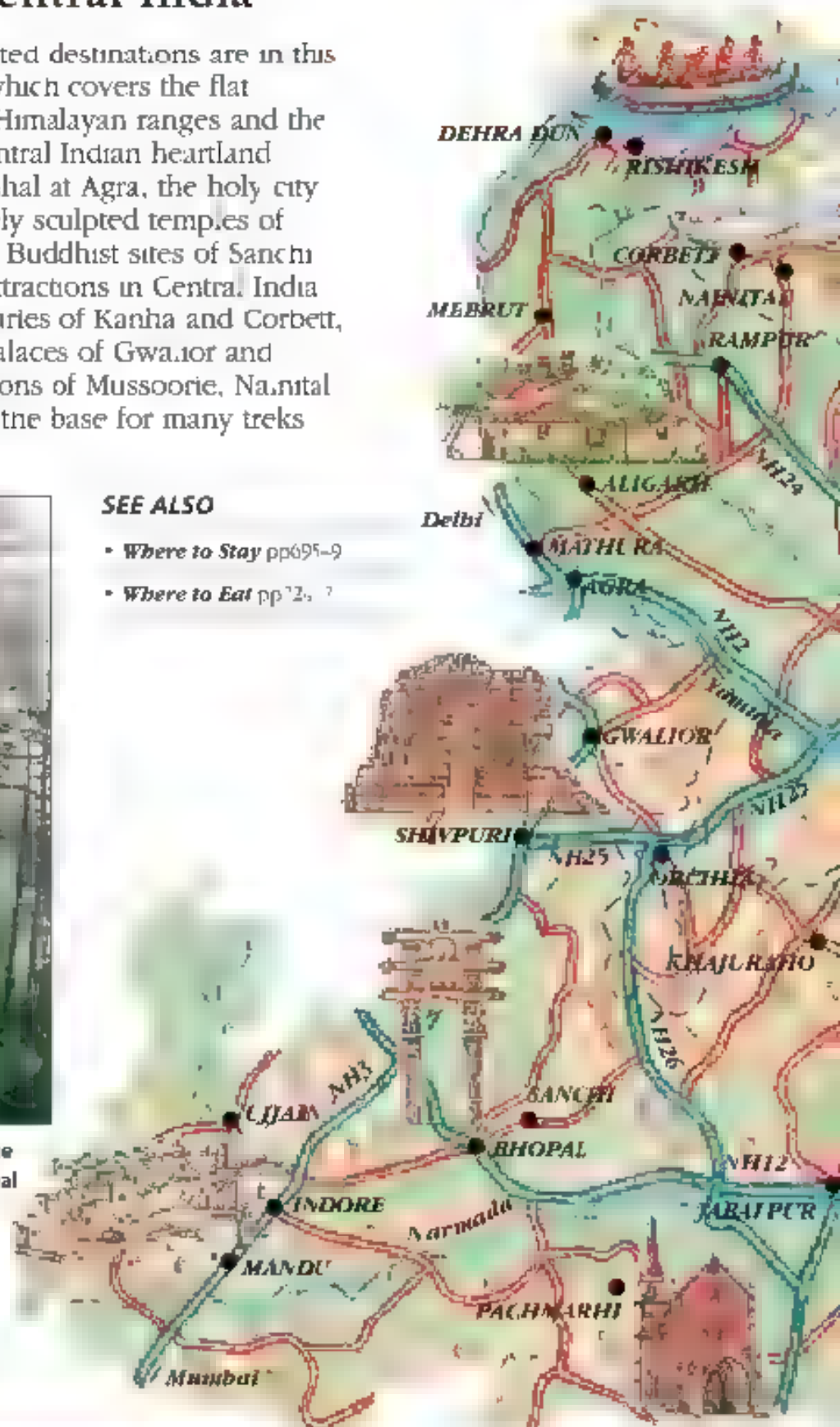


Luxuriant forested hills of chir pine and alpine meadows in Uttaranchal

0 km 80
0 miles 80

SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* pp695-9
- *Where to Eat* pp72, 7



KEY

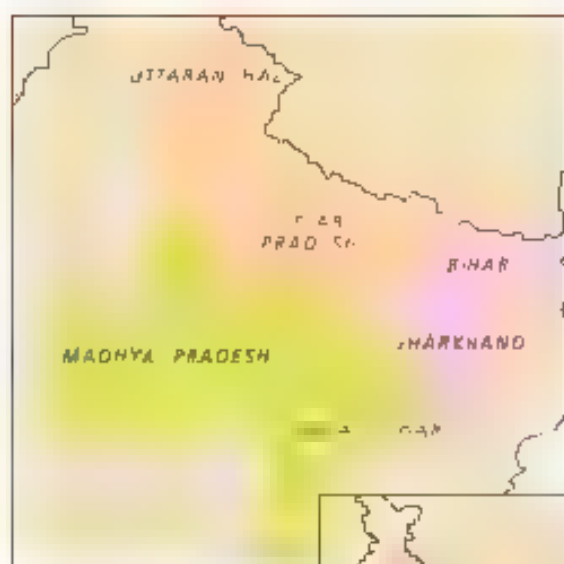
- National highway
- Major road
- River
- State border



A view of the cenotaphs of the Orchha rulers, lying along the Betwa river

GETTING AROUND

Major destinations and state capitals in this region, such as Agra, Varanasi, Dehra Dun, Khajuraho, Bhopal, Raipur and Patna, are served by domestic airlines, as well as fast mail/rail trains. An air-conditioned special train, the Taj Express, makes a comfortable day trip from Dehra to Agra possible. An extensive road network connects most of the towns in this region. National Highway 2 connects Agra, Allahabad and Varanasi, and Bhubaneswar. State highways branch off from National Highway 2 to the hills of Nainital and Mussoorie.



A rustic scene in a provincial town in Bihar

A PORTRAIT OF CENTRAL INDIA

Three of India's largest states – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh – lie in Central India. This vast and densely populated region is the country's Hindi-speaking belt (often called the "cow belt"), an area remarkable as much for its rich historical past and religious and cultural diversity as for its mineral wealth.

The River Ganges, which flows through Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar, has shaped much of the history and culture of both states. On its fertile banks, civilizations, cities and empires have grown and flourished, from 1500 BC onwards (see p41).

Today, the river continues to play a crucial role in the economy, culture, religion as well as imagination of the millions of people who live in the surrounding Gangetic Plains.

UP is both the spiritual heartland of Hinduism and the cultural heartland of Indian Islam – the former symbolized by Varanasi, the holiest of Indian cities (see pp202–208), and the latter by the Taj Mahal, the country's greatest Islamic monument (see pp172–5). With a population of 148 million, UP elects more members to the Indian parliament than any other state, and therefore plays a dominant role in national politics. Six Indian prime ministers have been from here,

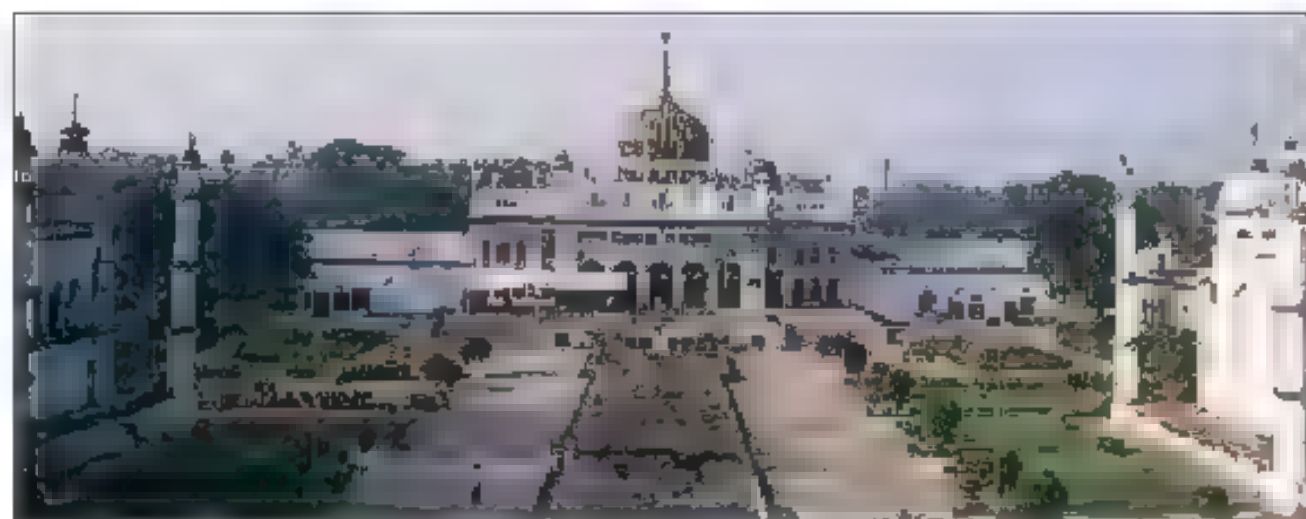


Detail from the great stupa at Sanchi

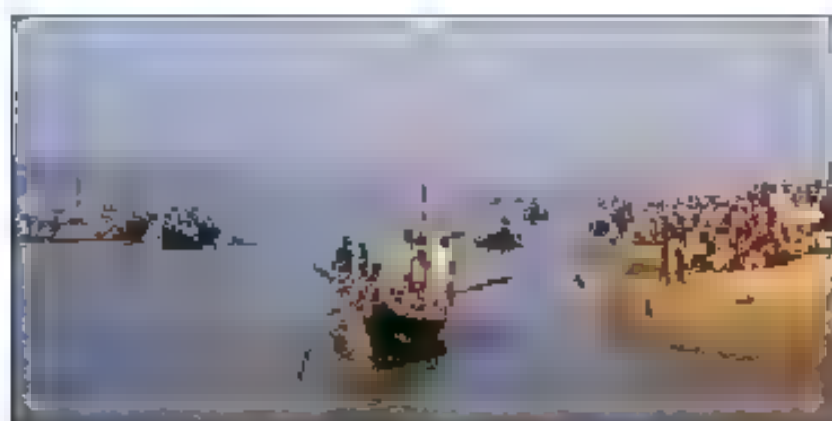
including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and grandson Rajiv Gandhi and, more recently, Atal Behari Vajpayee. The tides of contemporary politics often hinge on the strength of caste and religious sentiments. One tragic result of

this was the demolition of a 15th-century mosque in the town of Ayodhya in 1992, by Hindu religious extremists, because they claimed it stood at the spot where Lord Rama (see p27) was born. The incident led to widespread Hindu-Muslim riots and the issue continues to simmer.

In November 2000, several new states were created. In UP, the northernmost section, covering the Kumaon and Garhwal hills, became the new state of Uttarakhand. This is an area of great natural beauty, with picturesque hill stations, trekking trails, and ancient Hindu pilgrimage centres, in the shadow of towering Himalayan peaks.



The Chhota Imambara complex at Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh



Pilgrims on the banks of the Ganges in Bihar

Bihar, like UP, is a densely populated state, and its political agenda too has in recent years been dominated by caste-based issues, at the expense of social and economic development. As a result, rural poverty is still widespread and the literacy rate remains abysmally low, at around 40 per cent. Ironically, this was a state that once had one of the ancient world's greatest universities, at Nalanda (*see pp218-9*), and was the seat of two of India's greatest empires, the Maurya and Gupta empires (*see pp42-3*). Bihar also occupies an important place in the history of Indian civilization, as the birthplace of Buddhism – for it was here, at Bodhi Gaya (*see p222*), that the Buddha gained enlightenment. This historic legacy can be seen in the state's famous Buddhist sites. Present-day Bihar has an earthy vitality, which can be experienced at the huge annual cattle fair at Sonapur (*see p216*), where a prime attraction is the unique elephant bazaar.

The new state of Jharkhand, in what was southern Bihar, came into being in November 2000. An area of great natural beauty, Jharkhand comprises a forested plateau, home to a large population of tribal people with distinctive cultures, who now dominate the political and economic life of their nascent state. Jharkhand is blessed with great mineral wealth, and its rich deposits of coal and iron, in particular, ensure its future prosperity.

Madhya Pradesh (MP) provides a sharp contrast to the flat, crowded plains of UP and Bihar, with its varied terrain and relatively sparse population. The countryside here is an enchanting mosaic of cotton fields, craggy ravines, rolling

hills, and vast tracts of forest and grassland, which are home to at least half of India's tiger population. A tragic industrial disaster in the state capital, Bhopal, in 1984 (*see p240*) has made the people of this state especially active in environmental issues, and many of them have been campaigning against a large dam on the Narmada river (*see p251*). MP still gets relatively few visitors, yet few other states can rival its range of attractions, which include the World Heritage monuments at Sanchi (*see pp244-5*) and Khajuraho (*see pp236-8*), and some of India's finest wildlife sanctuaries.

At the same time as Jharkhand and Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh came into being. This southeastern part of Madhya Pradesh is a thickly forested area, populated by different tribal communities, engaged in agriculture and a variety of beautiful crafts (*see p253*). Facilities are still being developed to welcome visitors to this fascinating part of the country.



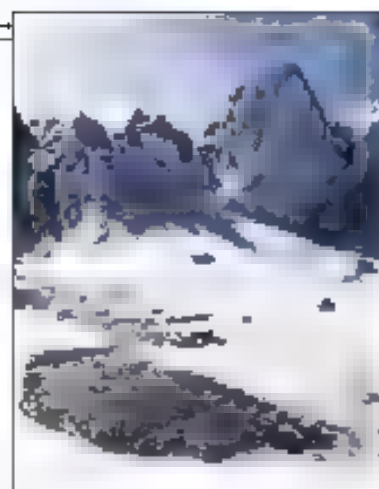
A poster depicting Varanasi as the home of Shiva

The River Ganges



**Goddess
Ganga**

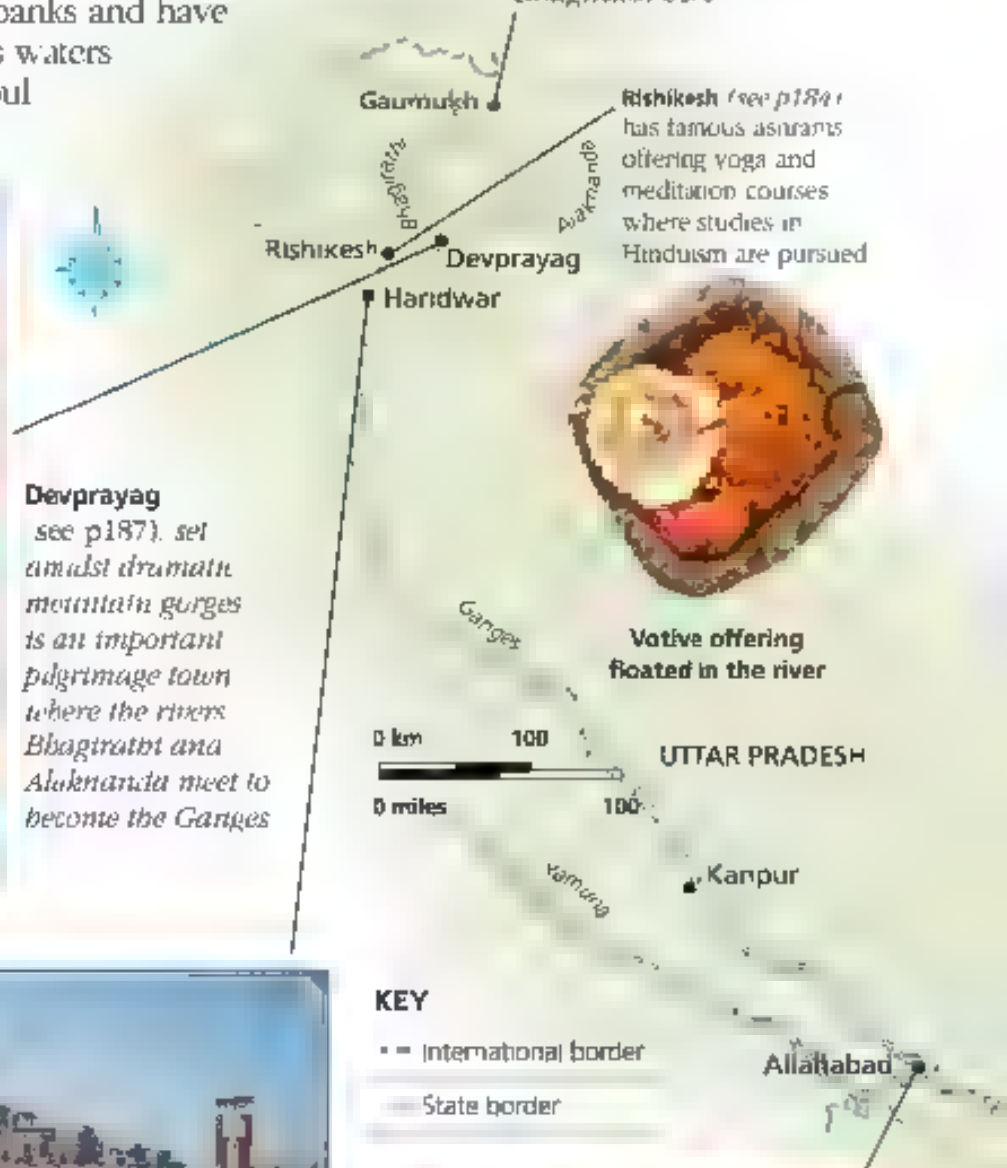
Rising in an ice cave, 4,140 m (13,583 ft) high in the Himalayas, the Ganges flows for 2,525 km (1,569 miles) through the mountains of Uttaranchal, and the vast plains of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal, before entering the sea in the Bay of Bengal. Through the ages, great civilizations have flourished on its banks, which are today lined with teeming cities, fertile paddy fields and innumerable temples and ghats. For above all, the Ganges is India's main spiritual and religious artery, sacred to millions of Hindus who believe that to bathe in its waters is to be absolved of all sins and to be cremated on its banks and have one's ashes immersed in its waters ensures salvation of the soul.



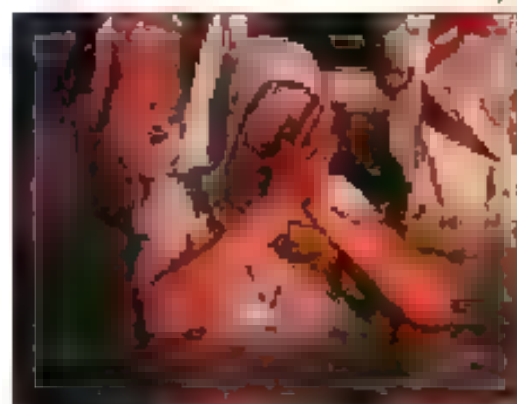
Gaumukh ("Cow's Mouth") at the mouth of the Gangotri Glacier is the source of the Ganges. Emerging as an icy torrent, the river is called the *Bhagirathi* here.



Devprayag (see p187), set amidst dramatic mountain gorges, is an important pilgrimage town where the rivers *Bhagirathi* and *Alaknanda* meet to become the *Ganges*.

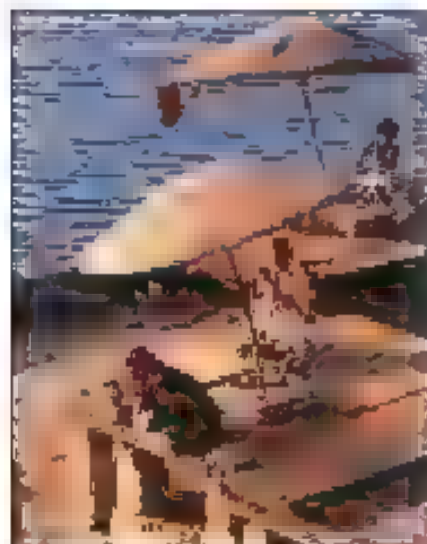


Haridwar, the "Gateway to the Gods" (see p184), is where the Ganges finally descends from the Himalayas and begins its long journey through the plains that constitute India's heartland. Haridwar teems with temples, holy men and pilgrims, especially around its main ghat, *Har-ki Pauri*, sanctified by the footprint of Lord Vishnu. It is one of the four sites where the mammoth *Kumbh Mela* is held every 12 years (see p211).

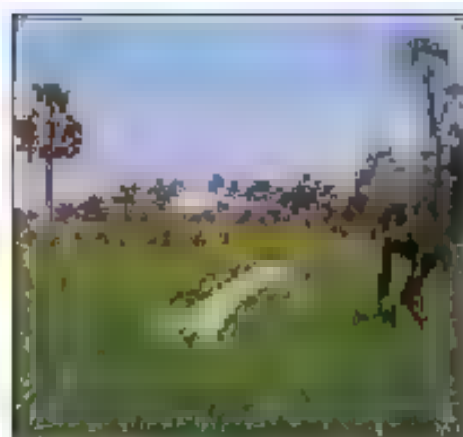


Allahabad (see p210) marks the confluence of three holy rivers: the Ganges, the *Yamuna*, and the mythical *Saraswati*. The *Kumbh Mela* held here in 2001 attracted some 30 million pilgrims.

The Myth of the Ganges holds that the celestial River Ganga was brought to earth by sage Bhisma so that he could sprinkle her holy water on the ashes of his ancestors, who were struck down by Lord Vishnu for their wickedness. The river water would ensure salvation for their souls. When the Ganga descended, Lord Shiva broke her enormous force by winding her through his hair to save the earth from being destroyed in a deluge. This myth is often depicted in paintings and sculptures.



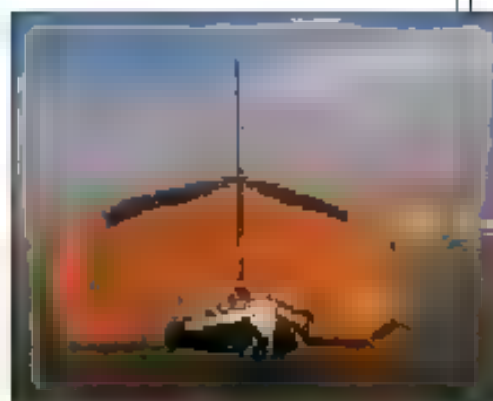
Varanasi (see pp202–208) is regarded by Hindus as the holiest spot on this holiest of rivers. Around 90 ghats line the river front where the living come to be purified by the waters of the Ganges, and the dead are brought to attain moksha (release from the endless cycle of death and rebirth).



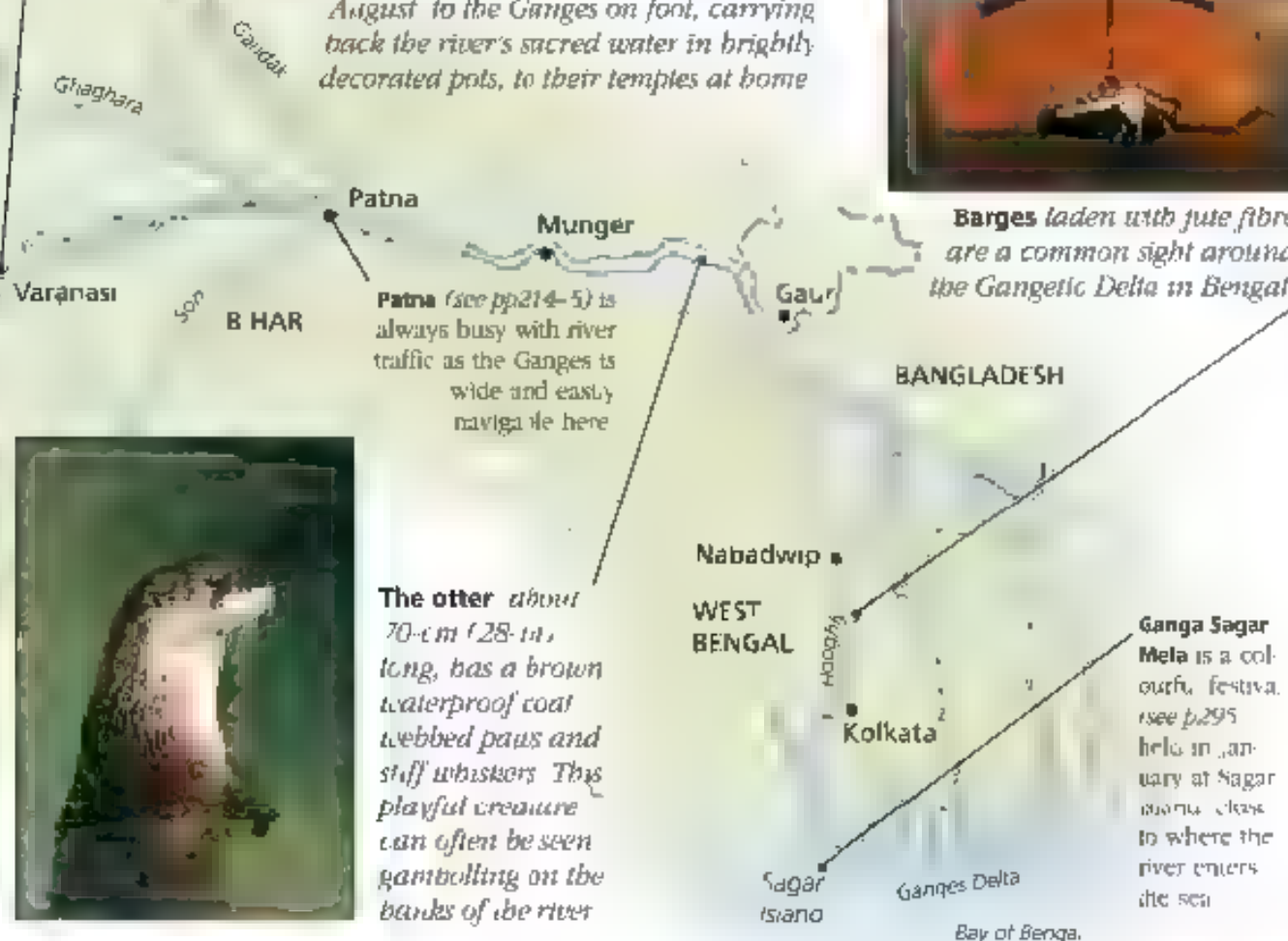
Fertile fields, enriched by alluvial soil, can be seen all along the Indo-Gangetic Plains. These fields of wheat and mustard are in Bihar.



Kanwaris are devotees of Shiva who make an arduous annual journey every August to the Ganges on foot, carrying back the river's sacred water in brightly decorated pots, to their temples at home.



Barges laden with jute fibre are a common sight around the Gangetic Delta in Bengal.



The otter (about 70-cm (28-in.) long, has a brown waterproof coat, webbed paws and stiff whiskers. This playful creature can often be seen gambolling on the banks of the river.

Ganga Sagar Mela is a colourful festival (see p295) held in January at Sagar Island, close to where the river enters the sea.

The Flavours of Central India

Since a large part of the region falls within the fertile Gangetic Plain, this area is rich in agriculture, produce. Stretching across the land are endless fields of rice and wheat as well as vast dark-green mango and litchi orchards. Rice and wheat are both eaten in the so-called Hindi-speaking states, although the food differs from community to community. The two main culinary influences are the sophisticated vegetarian cuisine from the holy city of Varanasi and Lucknow's refined mutton dishes and *biryani*s that evolved in the royal kitchens.



Street vendor frying samosas, a popular snack, in a tawa (wok)

UTTAR PRADESH & UTTARANCHAL

Roughly, this region has three types of cuisine: vegetarian, Muslim or nawabi, and Uttaranchali. The vegetarian food of the plains is very refined, cooked in pure *ghee* (clarified butter) and tempered with asafoetida, *garam masala* (curry powder)

cumin and chili powder. Uttar Pradesh's street food such as savoury *chaat*, is famous and the best can be found in the lanes of Varanasi.

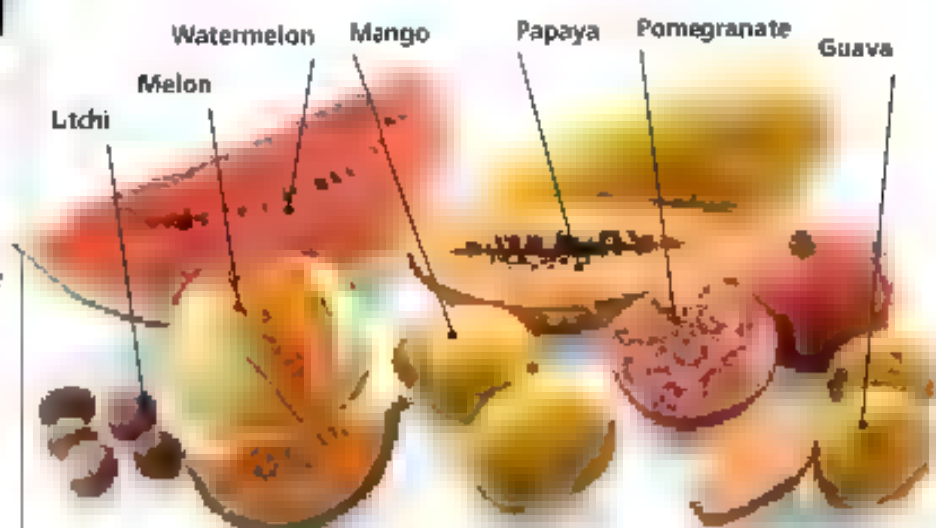
The states of Awadh (now Lucknow) and Rampur produce an unsurpassable cuisine. Traditional *Dum pukht*, where food is sealed with dough in large pots and cooked on a slow fire, is the essence of Awadhi cuisine as is the subtle use of spices.



Bay leaves, cinnamon, cardamom, cumin, cloves and turmeric

From this region come two exquisite lamb *kebabs galauti* and *kakori*, while the delicately flavoured *pulaos* (rice dishes) are legendary.

In the Himalayan state of Uttaranchal, the food leans heavily on lentils, soya beans and *mundia* (buckwheat). Rice is the staple and the food is cooked in either *ghee* or mustard oil. A popular spice in this area is *bhanga* or hemp seeds.



A selection of fruits grown in Central India

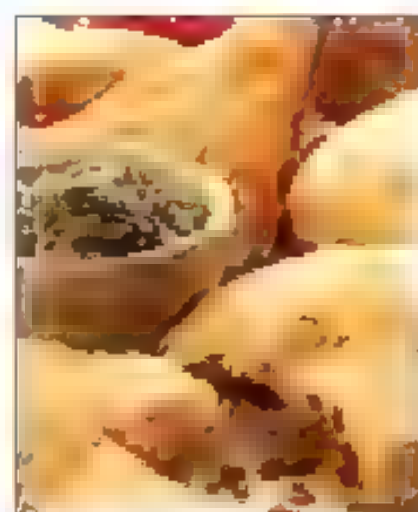
LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES



Mung dal

Subtlety and refinement are the main features of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian cooking. A regular meal comprises lentils, a vegetable dish, rice or *roti* (bread) with pickles to add piquancy. Typical of Varanasi is *sattark* or "pure" food, which is strictly vegetarian and lightly spiced, but without onions and garlic. The Muslim courts of Bhopal, Patna and Lucknow

further enriched the culinary repertoire with fragrant mutton *biryani*s, rich *kormas* and succulent *kebabs*. Some of the finest sweets from this region include *jalebis* (crisp golden spirals of fried batter), rich *badam halwa* (almond sweet) and the syrup-soaked *malpua* (type of pancake). *Paan* (betel leaf) is served at the end of a hearty meal.



Savouries include samosas, potato-filled turnovers, and kachoris (stuffed fried bread with chutney).



A roadside stall in Agra selling a selection of fresh vegetables

MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISHGARH

The food of Madhya Pradesh is as varied as the region. The princely states of Bhopal and Gwalior developed a distinctive cuisine that can be sampled in Gwalior's *barbat* (coriander (cilantro)-flavoured mutton curry), or Bhopal's *rizala* (chicken with yoghurt, green chilies and coriander). A gourmet maharaja from the small state of Salana even produced his own cookbook, *The Cooking Delights of the Maharajas*, with recipes culled from royal kitchens.

The Malwa Plateau and the city of Indore have a wide array of savouries, sweets and thirst-quenchers that keep the city buzzing until midnight. Here, visitors can savour *bhutta ri kees* (grated corn cooked in ghee, milk

and spices) or drink the cooling Malwa *kairi pana* (fresh mango juice). Breads include *baati* and *basla*, both made from wheat and shaped into balls. *Baati* is roasted and eaten with lentils while *basla* is fried in ghee.



Paan or betel leaf, often eaten as a digestive after a meal

BIHAR & JHARKHAND

An abundance of fruits and vegetables and a simple style makes Bihar's cuisine special. A popular ingredient is *sattu* (roasted chickpea flour), which is energy-giving and nutritious. It can be made into drinks, breads or mixed with wheat, potatoes and mashed aubergine (eggplant).

The tribes of Jharkhand eat cereals and a curry of boiled vegetables, tubers or edible roots, lamb and chilies. A favourite ingredient is the flower of the *mahua* (*Madhuca indica*), tree which has hallucinogenic properties. It is used to flavour rice in *asur kichdi*.

ON THE MENU

Aloo dum Banarsi Spicy potatoes cooked with cottage cheese, nuts and raisins

Kele ke kofta Green bananas mashed, made into balls and cooked in a lightly-spiced yoghurt sauce

Kurwai biryani Steaks are used instead of pieces of mutton in this rice dish, a speciality of Madhya Pradesh

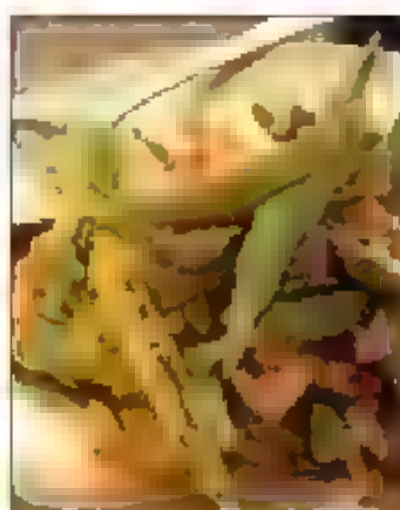
Mawa-bati A *gulab jamun* (deep-fried milk and flour dumpling) filled with nuts

Musallam raan Leg of lamb roasted with various spices

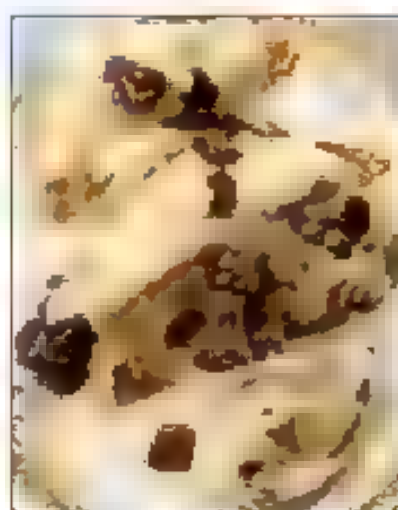
Shabdeg A classic mutton dish slow-cooked with turnips and flavoured with spices



Mutton korma has pieces of mutton in a yoghurt and saffron sauce, flavoured with cloves and cardamom

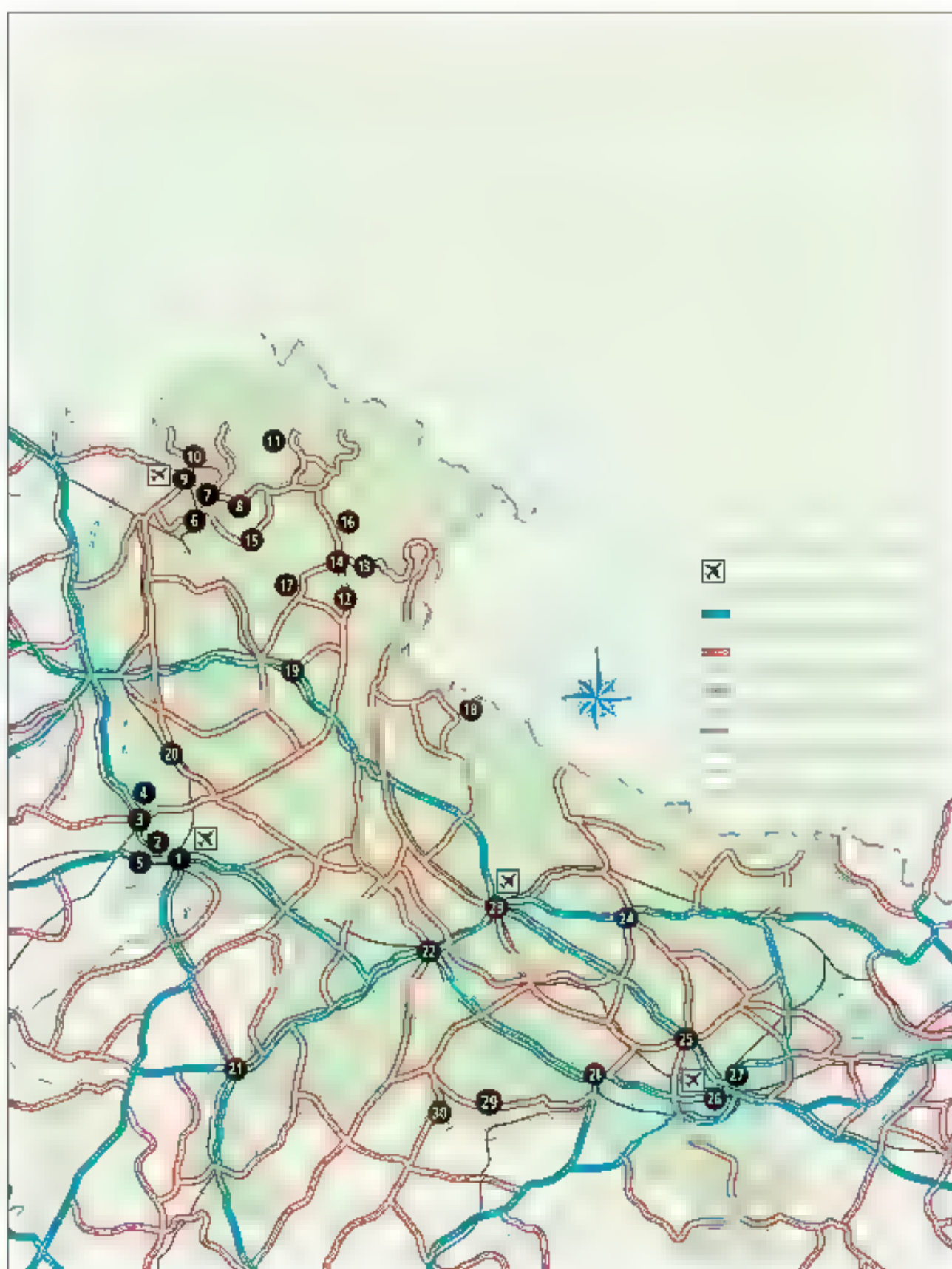
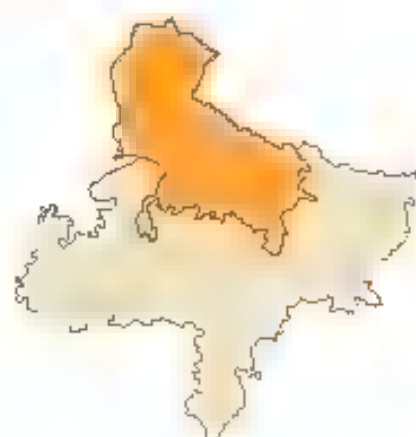


Okra is a favourite summer vegetable, served stuffed and fried or cooked in a yoghurt sauce



Shahi tukra is a royal bread pudding in a rich sauce of thickened milk, garnished with sliced almonds





Agra ❶



A *pietra dura* motif

Agra was the seat of the imperial Mughal court during the 16th and 17th centuries, before the capital was shifted to Delhi. The city, strategically located on the banks of the Yamuna and along the Grand Trunk Road, flourished under the patronage of the emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah

Jahan, attracting artisans from Persia and Central Asia and also from other parts of India, who built luxurious forts, palaces, gardens and mausoleums. Of these, the Taj Mahal, the Agra Fort and Akbar's abandoned capital of Fatehpur Sikri have been declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. With the decline of the Mughals, Agra was captured by the Jats, the Marathas, and finally by the British, early in the 19th century.

🏰 Agra Fort

See pp170–71

🕌 Jami Masjid

☐ daily ● to non-Muslims during prayer times.

A magnificently proportioned building in the heart of the historic town, the "Friday Mosque" was sponsored by Shah Jahan's favourite daughter, Jahanara Begum, who also commissioned a number of other buildings and gardens, including the canal that once ran down Chandni Chowk (see pp84–5), in Delhi. Built in 1648, the mosque's sandstone and marble domes with their distinctive zigzag chevron pattern dominate this section of the town. The eastern courtyard wing was demolished by the British in 1857 (see p53). Of interest are the tank with its

shahi chhatra (royal stove) for heating water within the courtyard, and the separate prayer chamber for ladies.

The area around Jami Masjid was once a vibrant meeting place, famous for its kebab houses and lively bazaars. A stroll or rickshaw ride through the narrow alleys can be a rewarding experience,



Detail of minaret, Jami Masjid

offering glimpses of an older and very different way of life reminiscent of Mughal Agra. This is also the city's crafts and trade centre where a vast array of products such as jewellery, *zari* embroidery, *mirat*, marble objects, *dhurries*, dried fruit,

sweets, shoes and kites are available. Some of the main bazaars are John Bazaar, Kaserat Bazaar and Kashmir Bazaar. Quieter lanes such as Panni Gali have many fine buildings, with



St John's College, designed by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob

imposing gateways leading into secluded courtyards where the thriving workshops of master craftsmen still exist.

🏰 St John's College

Mahatma Gandhi Rd. Tel (0562) 252 0123 ☐ Mon–Sat ● public hols

The unusual architecture of St John's College has been described as "an astounding mixture of the antiquarian, the scholarly and the symbolic". It consists of a group of red sandstone buildings, including a hall and library arranged around a quadrangle, all designed in a quasi-Fatehpur Sikri style by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob (see p353), who perfected the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. Started by the Church Missionary Society, the college was inaugurated in 1914 by the viceroy Lord Hardinge, and it continues to be one of Agra's most prestigious institutions.

🏰 Roman Catholic Cemetery

Opp Civil Courts ☐ daily

Towards the north of the town is the Roman Catholic Cemetery, the oldest European graveyard in North India, established in the 17th century by an Armenian merchant, Khoja Mortenepus.

A number of Islamic-style gravestones, with inscriptions in Armenian, survive today, and include those of the cannon expert Shah Nazar Khan, and Khoja Mortenepus himself. The cemetery also contains tombs of European



Jami Masjid, built by Shah Jahan's favourite daughter, Jahanara

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp695–7 and pp724–6



John Hessian's tomb in the Roman Catholic Cemetery

missionaries, traders and adventurers such as the 18th-century French freebooter Walter Reinhardt. The largest tomb is that of John Hessian, a British commander in the army of the Scindias, the rulers of Gwalior (see p228). Hessian's red sandstone tomb, built after his death in 1803, is modelled on the lines of the Taj Mahal. One of the oldest tombs belongs to the English merchant John Middenhall (1614), envoy of Elizabeth I, who arrived at the Mughal court in 1603 seeking permission to trade. Other interesting graves include those of the Venetian doctor Bernardino Maffei, and

Geronimo Veroneo (once wrongly regarded by some as the architect of the Taj). Near the chapel, an obelisk marks the grave of the four children of General Perron, French commander of the Scindia forces. Another Frenchman, Jean Philippe Bourbon, a kinsman of Henry IV of France, is also buried here.

Fort Railway Station

Tel (0562) 236 4131

This memorable Raj building was constructed in 1891 as a stopping-off point for colonial tourists visiting Agra's monuments. The octagonal bazaar *chok* that originally connected the Delhi Gate and Agra

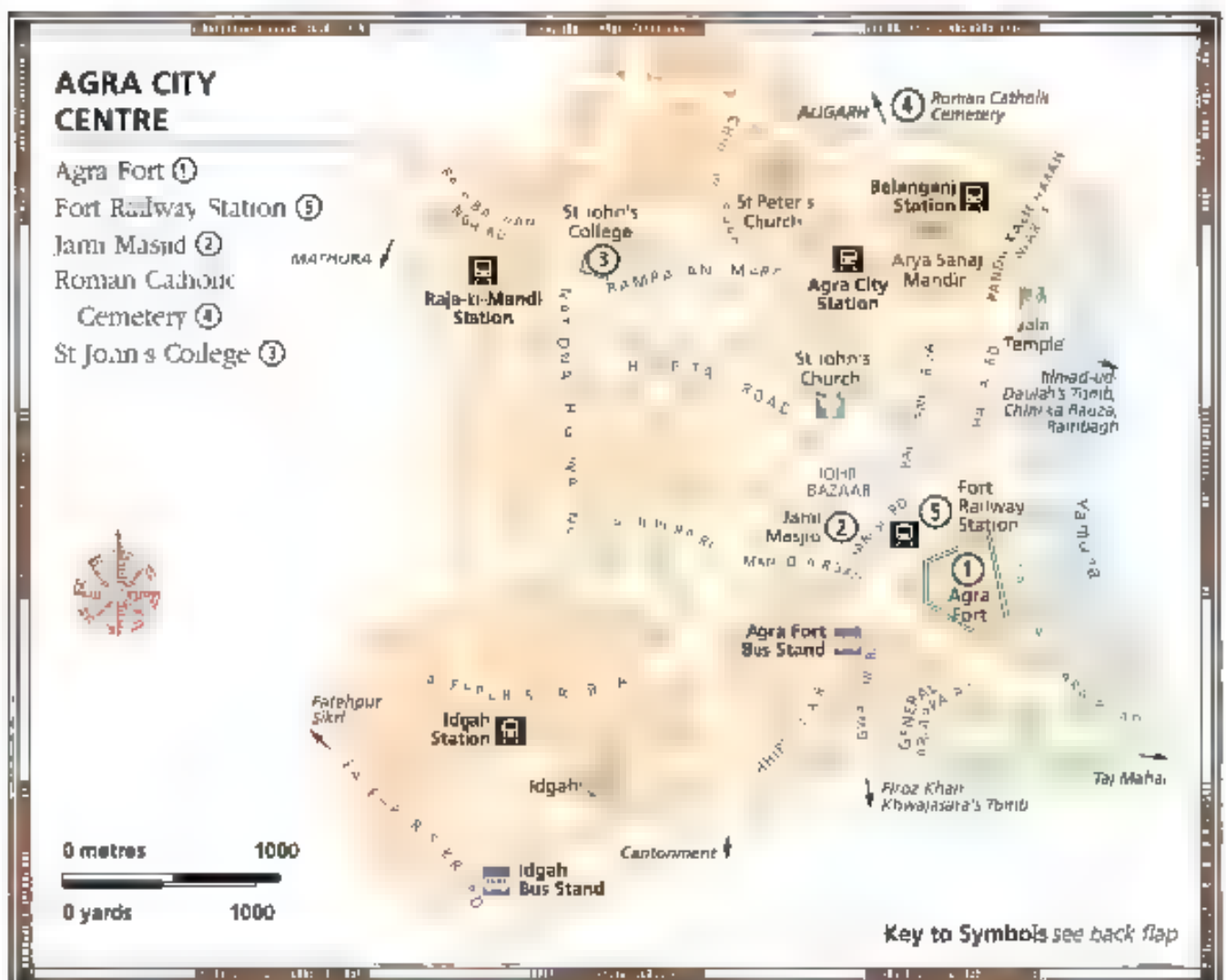
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Agra district 223 km (139 miles) SE of Delhi 1,160,000 Kheria, 8 km (5 miles) NE of city centre Agra Cantonment, (0562) 236 8598, Raja ki Mandi, (0562) 235 4477 Idgah, (0562) 236 4557 UPTDC, 64 Taj Rd, (0562) 236 0517; ITDC, 191 Mall Rd, (0562) 222 6368 Kailash Fair (Aug/Sep)

Fort to the old city and the Jami Masjid was demolished and this station, with its French chateau-style slate-roofed platforms, was built in its place. It is still in use today. Agra's two other railway stations are located in the cantonment and at Raja ki Mandi.



Auto-rickshaws parked outside the Fort Railway Station





The colonnaded arches of the Diwan-i-Aam, the hall used for the emperor's public audiences

Agra Fort

 daily.  free on Fri.

Sun et Lumière 7.30pm daily 
Situating on the west bank of the Yamuna, Agra Fort was built by Emperor Akbar between 1565 and 1573. Its imposing red sandstone ramparts form a crescent along the river front, and encompass an enormous complex of courtly buildings, ranging in style from the early eclecticism of Akbar to the sublime elegance of Shah Jahan. The barracks to the north are 19th-century British additions. A deep moat, once filled with water from the Yamuna, surrounds the fort.

The impressive **Amar Singh Gate**, to the south, leads into the fort. To its right is the so-called **Jahangiri Mahal**,

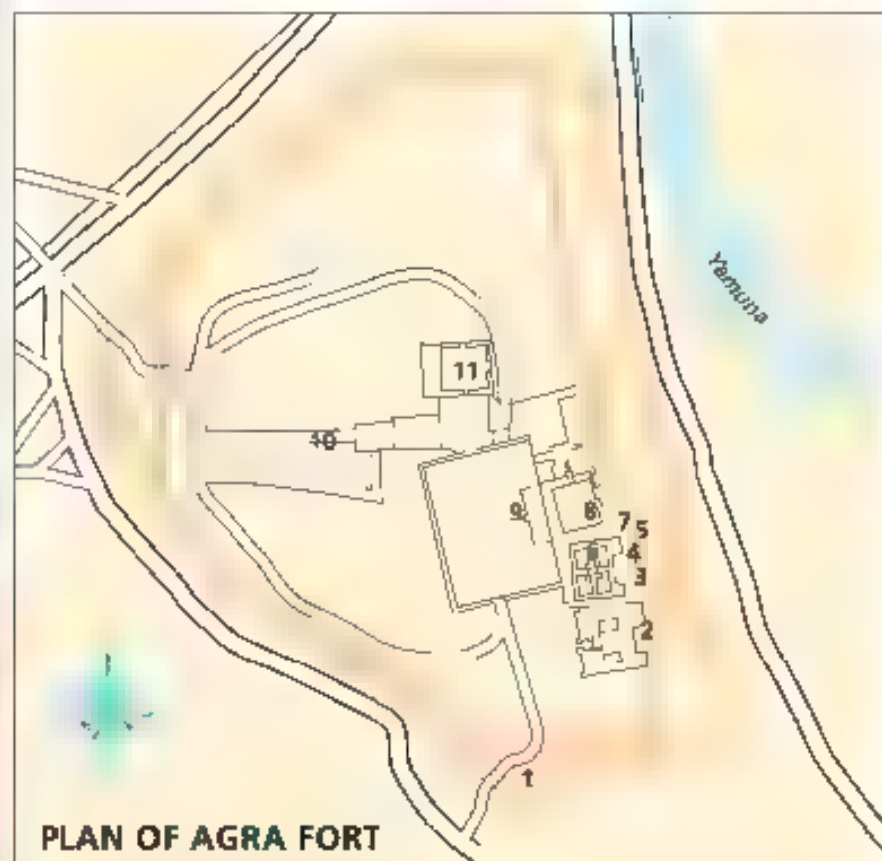
the only major palace in the fort that dates back to Akbar's reign. This complex arrangement of halls, courtyards and galleries, with dungeons underneath, was the zenana or main harem. In front of the Jahangiri Mahal is a large marble pool which, according to legend, used to be filled in Nur Jahan's time with

thousands of rose petals so that the empress could bathe in its scented waters.

Along the river front are the **Khas Mahal**, an elegant marble hall with a vividly painted ceiling, characteristic of Shah Jahan's style of architecture, and two golden pavilions with *bangaldar* roofs (curved roofs derived from Bengal).



A riverside view of the Jahangiri Mahal, the emperor's main harem



PLAN OF AGRA FORT

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Amar Singh Gate | 7 Dewan-i-Khas |
| 2 Jahangiri Mahal | 8 Machchh Bhawan |
| 3 Khas Mahal and Anguri Bagh | 9 Courtyard of the Dewan-i-Aam |
| 4 Sheesh Mahal | 10 Nagina Masjid |
| 5 Mansamman Bari | 11 Moti Masjid |
| 6 Mina Masjid | |



St George's Church in Agra Cantonment, built in 1826

nuts) These pavilions were once associated with the princesses Jahanara and Roshanara, and have narrow niches which could have been used to conceal jewels. Facing them is **Anguri Bagh** ("Grape Garden") with its fountains and candle-niches. The **Sheesh Mahal** and roya

bat is are to the northeast near the gloriously inlaid **Musamman Burj**, a double-storeyed octagonal tower with clear views of the Taj. This was where Shah Jahan, imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb, spent the last years of his life. **Mina Masjid**

("Gem Mosque") probably the smallest in the world and the emperor's private mosque, is nearby. Next to Musamman Burj is the **Diwan-i-Khas**, a lavishly decorated open hall with fine *pietra dura* work on its columns, where the emperor would meet his court. Two thrones, in white marble and black slate, were placed on the terrace so that the emperor could watch the elephant fights below. Opposite is the **Machchhi Bhavan** ("Fish House") once a magnificent water palace. To its west is the **Diwan-i-Aam**, an arcade hall within a courtyard. Its throne-alcove of inlaid marble provided a sumptuous setting for the fabled Peacock Throne. To the northwest is the **Nagina Masjid** ("Jewel Mosque") built by Shah Jahan for his harem and the **Moti Masjid** ("Pearl Mosque")



Musamman Burj

Cantonment

Enclosed by Mahatma Gandhi Rd, Grand Parade Rd & Mall Rd.

The pleasant, tree-shaded army cantonment area, with its own railway station and orderly avenues has many interesting public buildings, churches, cemeteries and bungalows in a medley of styles dating from colonial times. **St George's Church**

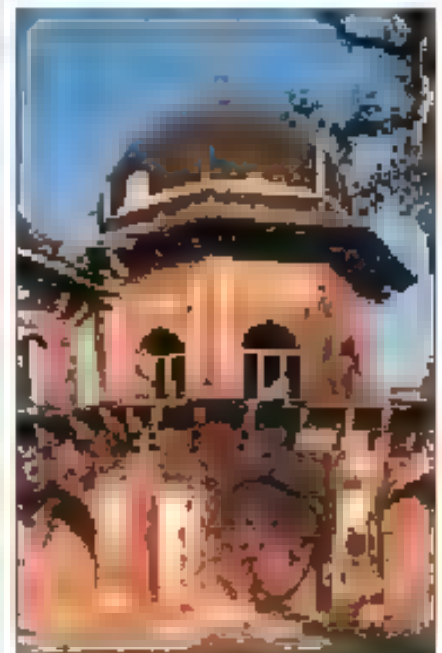
(1826), a plastered ochre-coloured building was designed by Colonel H. Boileau, architect of Shimla's Christ Church (see p110). **Havelock Memorial Church** constructed in 1873 in a "true Classical style",

commemorates one of the British generals of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Other buildings in this area include **Queen Mary's Library**, the **Central Post Office** and the **Circuit House** which used to accommodate Raj officials.

Firoz Khan Khwajasara's Tomb

S of Agra, on Gwalior Rd. ☐ daily
A signpost on the Gwalior Road indicates the turning to this unusual 17th-century octagonal structure, standing on the edge of a lake. This marks the spot where Firoz Khan Khwajasara, a natural-born eunuch and the custodian of Shah Jahan's palace harem, is buried.

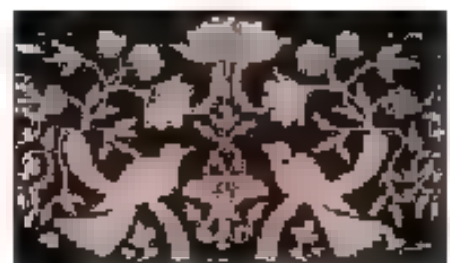
The red sandstone edifice stands on a high platform and has a gateway attached to the main building. Steps lead to the upper storey where a central pavilion containing the grave is located. Highly stylized stone carvings embellish the surface. Interestingly, unlike other buildings of the period, there is an absence of calligraphic inscriptions. If the tomb is closed, the watchman from the village will open the gate.



A view of the 17th-century tomb of Firoz Khan Khwajasara

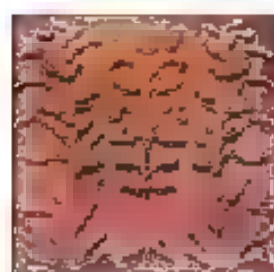
GOLD THREAD AND BEAD ZARDOZI

Agra's flourishing traditional craft of elaborate gold thread (*zari*) and bead embroidery is known as *zardozi*. This technique was Central Asian in origin and came to the region with the Mughal emperors. Local craftsmen in the old city developed further refinements and complex new patterns to create garments and accessories for the imperial court. However, with the decline of court patronage, the skill languished and almost vanished. It owes its recent revival to encouragement from contemporary fashion designers.



Detail of an embroidered textile

Agra: Taj Mahal



Carved dado on
outer niches

One of the world's most famous buildings, the Taj Mahal was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631. Its perfect proportions and exquisite craftsmanship have been described as "a vision, a dream, a poem, a wonder".

This sublime garden-tomb, an image of the Islamic garden of paradise, cost nearly 41 million rupees and 500 kilos (1,102 lbs) of gold. About 20,000 workers laboured for 12 years to complete it in 1643.



The Dome

The 44 m (144-ft) double dome is capped with a finial.

★ Marble Screen

The filigree screen, daintily carved from a single block of marble, was meant to veil the area around the royal tombs.



Four minarets, each 40 m (131 ft) high and crowned by an open octagonal pavilion or *chhatra*, frame the tomb, highlighting the perfect symmetry of the complex.

Plinth



★ Tomb Chamber

Mumtaz Mahal's cenotaph, raised on a platform, is placed next to Shah Jahan's. The actual graves, in a dark crypt below, are closed to the public.

Yamuna
river

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Marble Screen
- ★ Tomb Chamber
- ★ Pietra Dura

The *charbagh* was irrigated with water from the Yamuna river

Main entrance

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Tajganj Tel (0562) 233 0496.

[] 6am–7pm Sun–Thu

● Fri. [] []

[] Taj Mahotsava (Feb)

Museum [] 10am–5pm

Tue–Thu ● public hols. []



The Lotus Pool

Named after its lotus-shaped fountain spouts, the pool reflects the tomb. Almost every visitor is photographed sitting on the marble bench here.

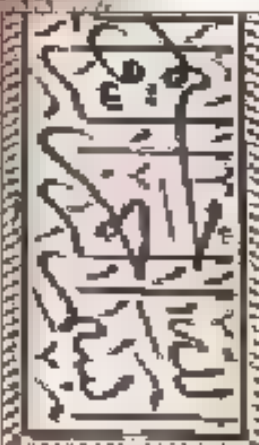
Pishtaq

Recessed arches provide depth while their inland panels reflect the changing light to give the tomb a mystical aura.



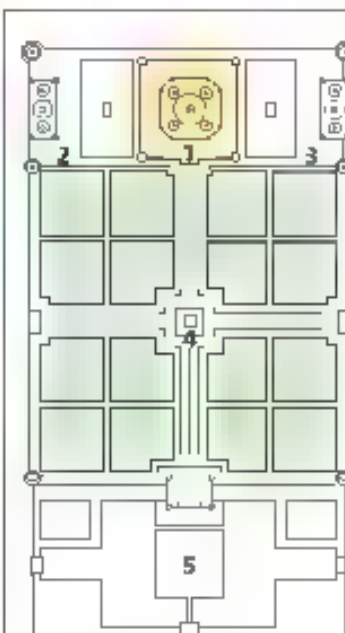
★ Pietra Dura

Inspired by the paradise garden, intricately carved floral designs inlaid with precious stones embellish the austere white marble surface to give it the look of a jewelled casket.



Calligraphic Panels

The size of the Koranic verses increases as the arch gets higher, creating the subtle optical illusion of a uniformly flowing script.



TAJ MAHAL

- 1 Main Tomb
- 2 Masjid (mosque)
- 3 Mehmankhana (guesthouse)
- 4 Charbagh (quadrilateral garden)
- 5 Gateway

KEY

- [] Area illustrated
- [] Charbagh

Decorative Elements of the Taj



Stylized floral motif

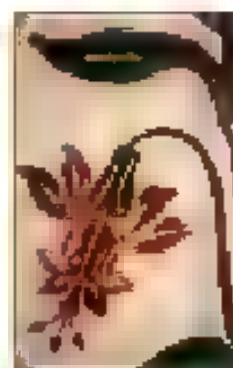
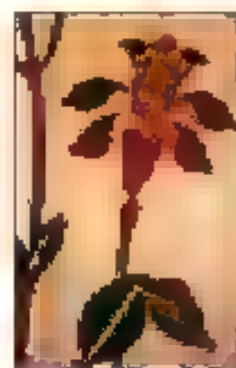
It is widely believed that the Taj Mahal was designed to represent an earthly replica of one of the houses of paradise. Its impeccable marble facing, embellished by a remarkable use of exquisite surface design, is a showcase for the refined aesthetic that reached its height during Shah Jahan's reign. Described as "one of the most elegant and harmonious buildings in the world", the Taj, indeed, manifests the wealth and luxury of Mughal art as seen in architecture and garden design, painting, jewelry, calligraphy, textiles, carpet-weaving and furniture.



Detail of the marble screen with an inlaid chrysanthemum

PIETRA DURA

The Mughals were great naturalists and believed that flowers were the "symbols of the divine realm". In the Taj, *pietra dura* has been extensively used to translate naturalistic forms into decorative patterns that complement the majesty of its architecture.



Flowers such as the tulip, lily, iris, poppy and narcissus were depicted as sprays or in arabesque patterns. Stones of varying degrees of colour were used to create the shaded effects.



Marble inlay above the mosque's central arch



White marble, black slate and yellow, red and grey sandstone used for decoration

THE ART OF PIETRA DURA

The Florentine technique of *pietra dura* is said to have been imported by Emperor Jahangir and developed in Agra as *pachikari*.

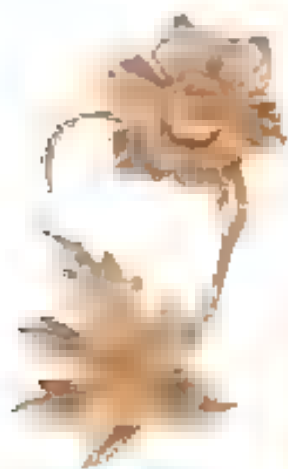
Minute slivers of precious and semi-precious stones, such as carnelian, lapis lazuli, turquoise and malachite, were arranged in complex stylized floral designs set into a marble base. Even today, artisans in the old city maintain pattern books with the fine motifs used on the Taj to recreate 17th-century designs in contemporary pieces.



A contemporary marble inlaid platter



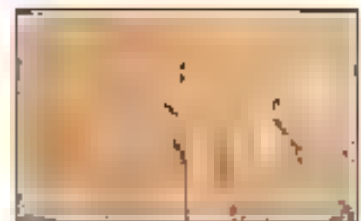
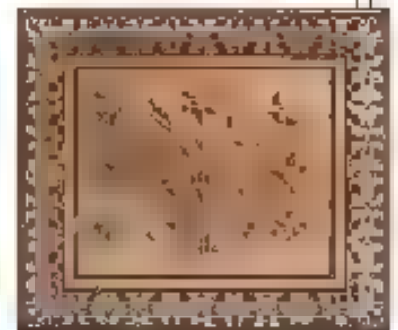
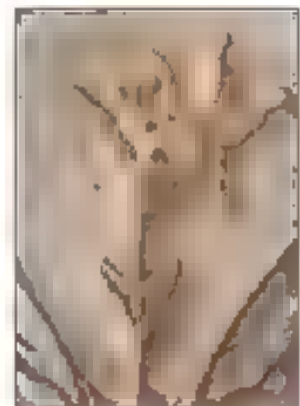
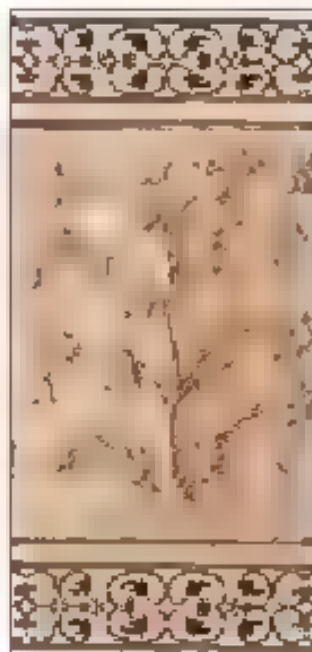
A single flower, often with more than 35 variations of carnelian



CARVED RELIEF WORK

Decorative panels of flowering plants, foliage and vases are realistically carved on the lower portions of the walls. While the *pietra dura* adds colour to the pristine white marble, these highlight the texture of the polished marble and sandstone surface.

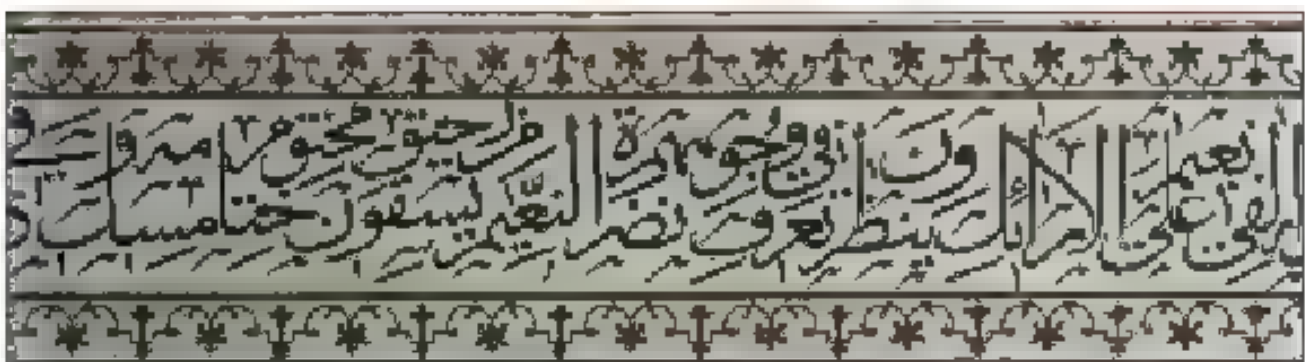
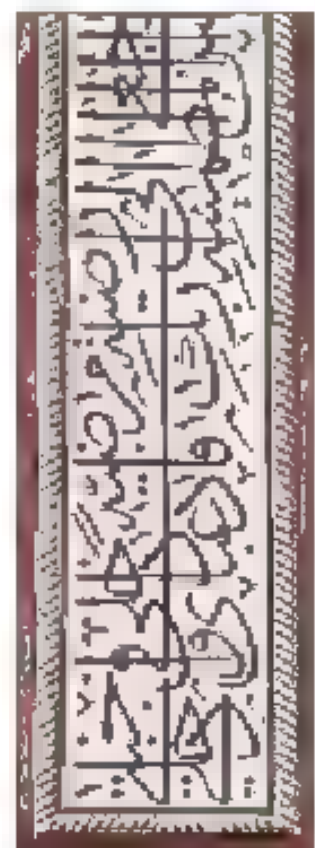
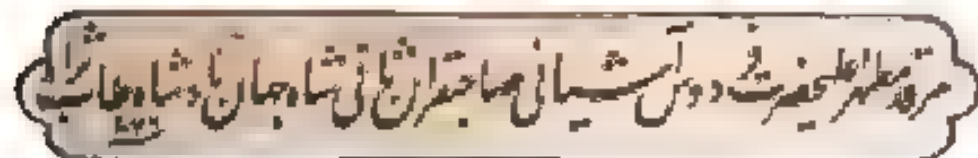
Floral sprays carved in relief on the marble and sandstone walls, are framed with *pietra dura* and stone inlay borders. The profusion of floral motifs in the Taj symbolizes the central paradise theme.



Jali patterns on the octagonal perforated screen surrounding the tombs are a complex combination of the geometric and floral. The filtered light captures the intricate designs and casts mosaic-like shadows on the tombs.

CALLIGRAPHY

Inlaid calligraphy in black marble was used as a form of ornamentation on undecorated surfaces. The exquisitely detailed panels of inscribed Koranic passages, that line the recessed arches like banners, were designed by the Persian calligrapher, Amanat Khan.



Exploring Agra: the East Bank

The picturesque east bank of the Yamuna is dotted with historic gardens, palaces, pavilions and the exquisite tomb of **Itimad-ud-Daulah**.

North of Itimad-ud-Daulah is **Chini ka Rauza**, (literally 'China Tomb' after its tiled exterior) built by Afza Khan, a poet-scholar from Shiraz (Persia) who was Shah Jahan's finance minister. This large square structure is Persian in style, and at one time its surface was covered with glazed tiles from Lahore and Multan, interspersed with graceful calligraphic panels. The burial chamber within has painted stucco plaster designs that must have complemented the tiled exterior.

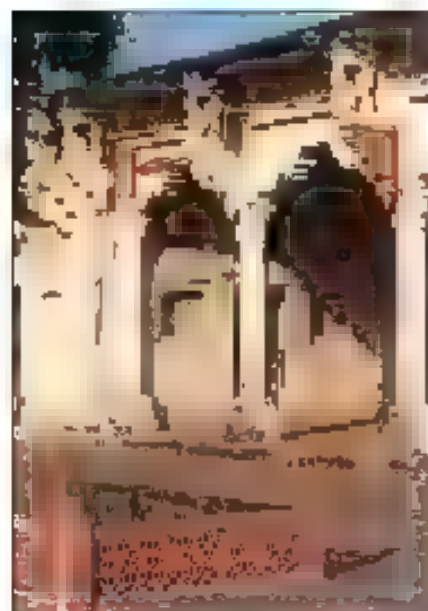
Lying further upriver is the quiet, tree-shaded **Rambagh** or **Aram Bagh** ('Garden of Rest'). This is believed to be the earliest Mughal garden, laid out by Babur, the first Mughal emperor, in 1526. The garden also served as his temporary burial place before his body was taken to Kabul to be interred. The spacious walled garden, divided by walkways that lead to a raised terrace with open pavilions overlooking the river, was further developed by the empress Nur Jahan.

Chini ka Rauza

1 km (0.6 miles) N of Itimad-ud-Daulah's Tomb. ☐ daily ☒

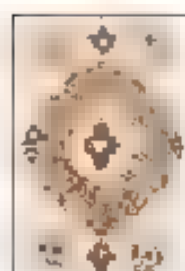
Rambagh

3 km (2 miles) N of Itimad-ud-Daulah's Tomb. ☐ daily ☒ free on Fri



Riverside pavilion at Rambagh

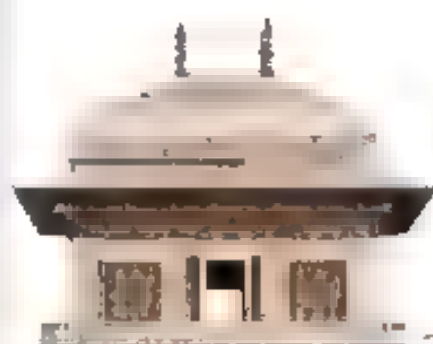
Agra: Itimad-ud-Daulah's Tomb



A stylized floral motif

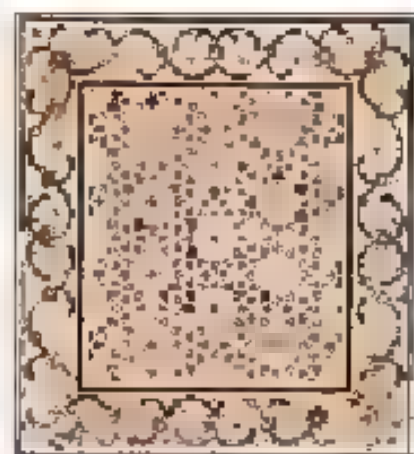
Lyricaly described as a "jewel box in marble", the small yet elegant garden-tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah, the "Lord Treasurer" of the Mughal empire, was built by his daughter Nur Jahan, Jahangir's favourite wife. Begun in 1622, it took six years to complete. The tomb is a combination of white marble, coloured mosaic, stone inlay and lattice work. Stylistically this is the most innovative 17th-century

Mughal building and marks the transition from the robust red sandstone architecture of Akbar to the sensuous refinement of Shah Jahan's Taj Mahal.



Upper Pavilion

The replica tombs of Itimad-ud-Daulah and his wife are placed in the marble-screened upper pavilion.

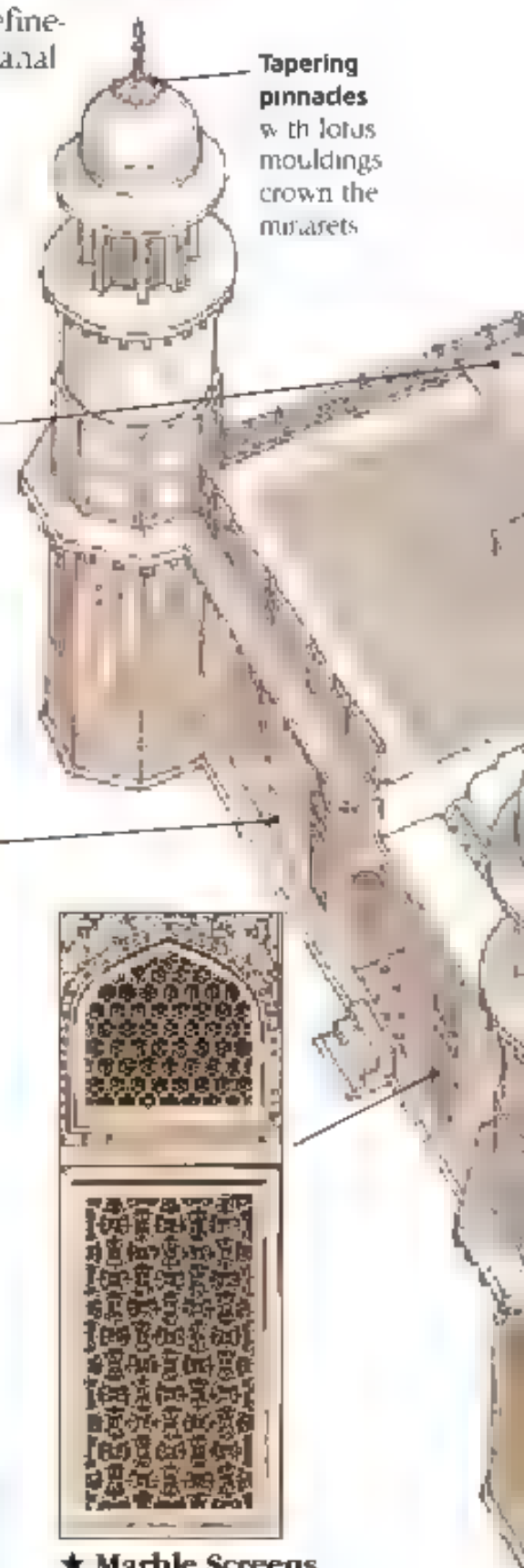


Mosaic Patterns

Panels of geometric designs, created by inlaid coloured stones, decorate the dado level of the tomb.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Marble Screens
- ★ Tomb Chamber
- ★ Pietra Dura



Tapering pinnacles with lotus mouldings crown the minarets.



★ Marble Screens

Perforated marble screens with complex ornamental patterns are carved out of a single slab of marble.

The dome with its canopy-like shape is different from the conventional domes of this period



The Tomb

The square two-storeyed tomb stands in the centre of a charbagh. At the four corners of the low platform are four squat attached minarets

Marble latticed balustrade



★ Tomb Chamber

The ceiling has incised, painted and gilded stucco and statalite patterns. The yellow marble caskets appear as if carved out of wood



Chhatri

Open pillared domed pavilions top the minarets

★ Pietra Dura

The polished marble surface is covered with stone inlay. The first time this technique was extensively used in Mughal architecture

Entrance



Painted Floral Patterns

Niches with painted floral bouquets, trees, fruit and wine decanters embellish the interior of the central chamber of the main tomb



The entrance to Akbar's mausoleum at Sikandra

Sikandra ③

Agra district 8 km (5 miles) NW of Agra. **Akbar's Mausoleum**
Tel (0562) 264 1230 (contact for permission to go to the tomb terrace).
 daily free on Fri.
 Urs at Akbar's Tomb (mid-Oct)

The Mughal Emperor Akbar is buried in this small village on the outskirts of Agra. It is believed that Akbar designed and started the construction of his own mausoleum, which was modified and completed by his son Jahangir. The result is this impressive, perfectly symmetrical complex, with the tomb located in the centre of a vast walled garden. The main gateway, to the south, is a magnificent red sandstone structure with a co-ossal central arch finished with an exuberant polychrome mosaic of inlaid white marble, black slate and coloured stone. On each corner are four graceful marble minarets, considered to be the forerunners of those

that can be seen at the Taj Mahal in Agra (see pp172-3).

The large garden, where monkeys frolic, is a typical *churbagh*, an enclosed garden divided into four quarters (representing the four quarters of life) by a system of raised walkways, sunken groves and water channels.

The main tomb is a distinct departure from the conventional domed structure of the tomb of Akbar's father Humayun, at Delhi (see p83). The first three storeys of this majestic four-tiered composition consist of red sandstone pavilions. Above them is an exquisite marble-screened terrace enclosing the replica tomb, which is profusely carved with floral and arabesque designs. Chinese cloud patterns and the 99 names of Allah.

The upper levels, previously accessible through special permission, are now closed due to security reasons.

Mathura ③

Mathura district 62 km (39 miles) NW of Agra. 299,000
F Old Bus Stand, (0565) 240 6468
 Holi (Mar), Hariyali Teej (Jul), Janmashtami (Jul/Aug), Kansa Vadha (Sep), Annakut (Sept/Oct)

Mathura, on the west bank of Yamuna river, is revered as the birthplace of one of India's most popular gods, Lord Krishna. A dark, cell-like room in the rather modern **Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple**, on the periphery of the city, is reputed to be the actual site of his birth. Further away,

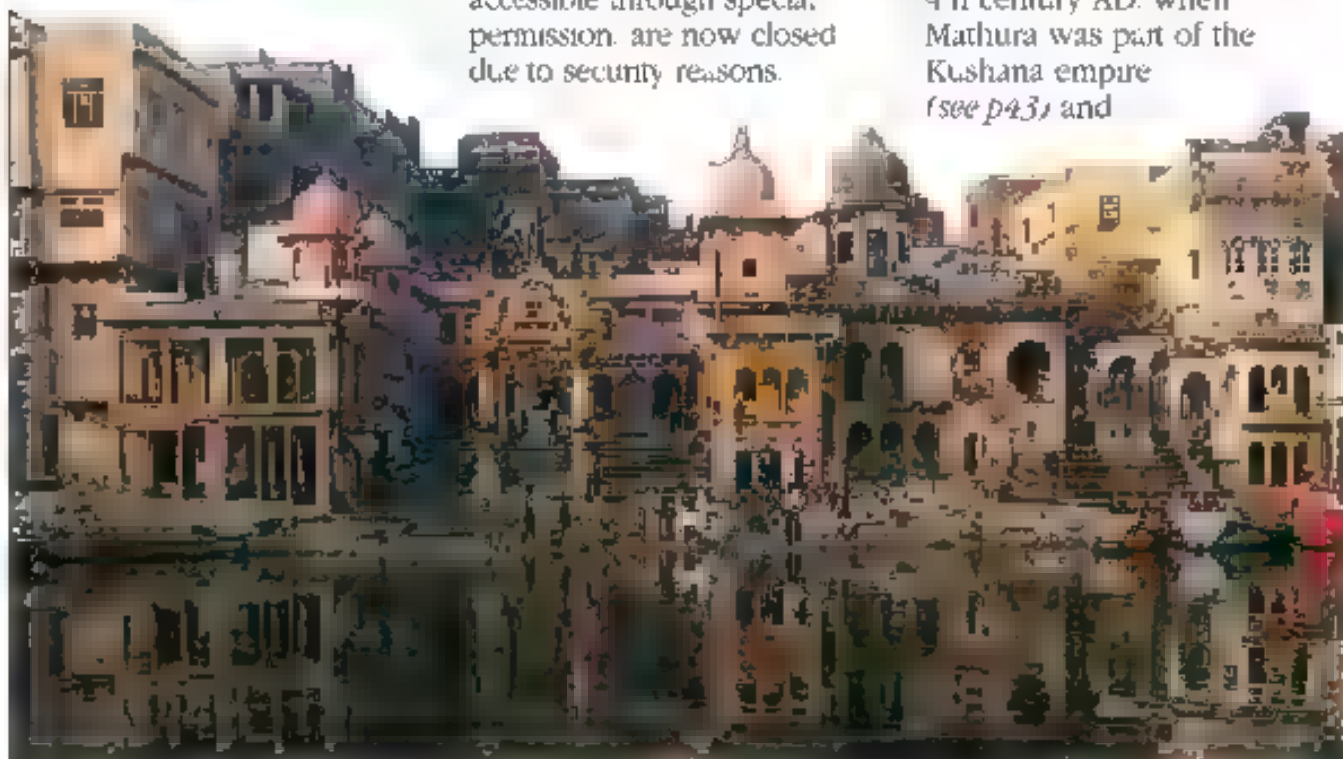
along the river front, Mathura's 25 ghats form a splendid network of temples, pavilions, trees and stone steps leading down to the water. The **Jami Masjid**, with its striking tilework, lies behind the river front. A charming oddity is the Roman Catholic **Church of the Sacred Heart**, built in 1860, in the army cantonment. It combines Western elements with details taken from local temple



A religious image, Mathura

architecture.

The **Government Museum** has a superb collection of sculpture in the distinctive local white-flecked red sandstone. These date from about the 5th century BC until the 4th century AD, when Mathura was part of the Kushana empire (see p43) and



Vishram Ghat at Mathura, where every evening at sunset oil lamps are floated on the river

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp695-7 and pp724-6

flourished as a major centre of Buddhism. Outstanding pieces include a Standing Buddha and the famous headless statue of the great Kushana king, Kanishka.

Government Museum

Dampier Nagar Tel (0565) 250 0847

☐ Tue–Sun. ☐ public hols. ☐ extra charges

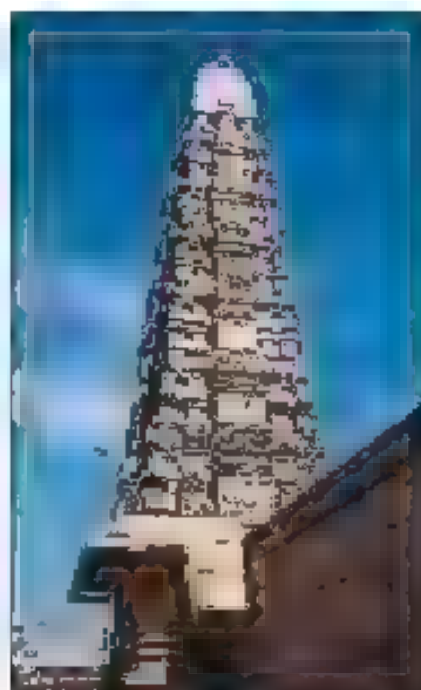
Brindavan ④

Mathura district 68 km (42 miles)

N of Agra. ☐ daily ☐ Holi

(Mar) Rath ka Mela (Mar), Haryana Teej (Jul), Janmashtami (Jul/Aug)

Situated along the Yamuna Brindavan ("Forest of Fragrant Basil") is an important pilgrim centre for devout Hindus who believe that the young Krishna once lived here as a humble cowherd and romanced the beautiful milkmaid Radha. Their love is widely celebrated in dance, art and literature. Brindavan's numerous temples, ashrams and ghats were mainly built by Hindu kings and rich merchants. Many Hindu widows, clad in white with their heads shaven, live in ashrams here, devoting their lives to the worship of Krishna. At the edge of the town is the historic **Govindeoji Temple** (see p352), built in 1590 by Raja Man Singh I of Amber. Across is the 19th-century **Sri**



Gopura of the South Indian-style Ranganathji Temple

Ranganathji Temple with a gold-plated ritual pillar and an interesting museum of temple treasures.

Amidst the narrow streets of the old town are the sacred walled groves of **Seva Kunj**, associated with the traditional Rasika dance which narrates the life of Krishna. Other notable temples in Brindavan include the red sandstone **Madan Mohan Temple**, built in 1580, which stands on a hill next to the river; the popular **Banke Bihari Temple**, near the main bazaar; and the 16th-century **Jugal Kishore Temple**. The **ISKCON Temple**, on the outskirts of the town, is a more recent addition to Brindavan.

FESTIVALS OF UTTAR PRADESH & UTTARANCHAL

International Yoga Week (Feb), Rishikesh. Yoga is taught on the banks of the Ganges during this rejuvenating week-long festival.

Taj Mahotsava (Feb)

Agra. This ten-day cultural fiesta of music and dance is held in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal.

Jhansi Festival (Feb)

Jhansi. A five-day arts and crafts extravaganza unfolds against the backdrop of Jhansi's historic fort.

Rang Gulaal (Feb/Mar). The festival of colours, also known as Holi, is played with great abandon all over Uttar Pradesh.



Rang Gulaal celebrations

Janmashtami (Aug/Sep)

Brindavan and Mathura. To mark the birth of Krishna, pilgrims perform a circumambulation (*parikrama*) of sacred sites. Festivities reach a peak at midnight.

Ganga Festival (Oct/Nov)

Varanasi. The ancient glory of the Ganges is celebrated by devotees, who pay homage to the sacred river.

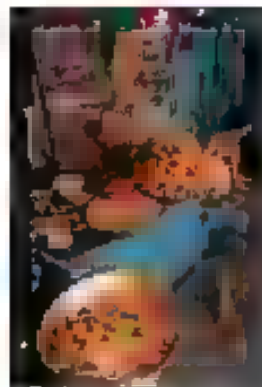
Lucknow Mahotsava

(Nov/Dec), Lucknow. Lucknow's historic past and continuing traditions are celebrated with food, crafts, music and dance.

Buddha Mahotsava (Dec)

Sarnath and Kushinagar. Religious festivities mark the Buddha's birth, attainment of enlightenment and death. These are held at Sarnath, where he preached his first sermon, and at Kushinagar, where he attained nirvana.

THE GRAND TRUNK ROAD



A roadside dhaba

The Grand Trunk Road, Rudyard Kipling's "stately corridor" that linked Calcutta (now Kolkata) in the east with Kabul in the northwest, was laid out by Sher Shah Sur (see p79) in the 16th century. In those days, it resounded with the movement of armies on campaign, and in times of peace, with the pomp and pageantry that accompanied the Mughal emperors as their court moved from Agra to Delhi. This remains one of Asia's great roads and North India's premier highway. Some

ancient shade-giving trees still stand, but the old caravanserais are now in ruins. Instead, at frequent intervals along the highway, there are *dhabs* where long-distance travellers, especially lorry-drivers, can stop for a cheap and filling meal of *dal* and *roti*, washed down with hot tea or cooling *lassi*. They can also snatch a quick nap on string cots (*charpays*) thoughtfully provided by *dhaba* owners.

Fatehpur Sikri ❸



Fretwork jali

Built by Emperor Akbar between 1571 and 1585 in honour of Salim Chishti, a famous Sufi saint of the Chishti order (see p376), Fatehpur Sikri was the Mughal capital for 14 years. A fine example of a Mughal walled city with defined private and public areas and imposing gateways, its architecture, a blend of Hindu and Islamic styles, reflects Akbar's secular vision as well as his style of governance. After the

city was abandoned, some say for lack of water, many of its treasures were plundered. It owes its present state of preservation to the initial efforts of the viceroy Lord Curzon, a legendary conservationist.



Khwabgah

The emperor's private sleeping quarters, with an ingenious ventilating shaft near his bed. He within this lavishly decorated "Chamber of Dreams"

Anoop Talao is a pool associated with Akbar's renowned court musician Tansen (see p228) who, as legend says, could light oil lamps with his magical singing.



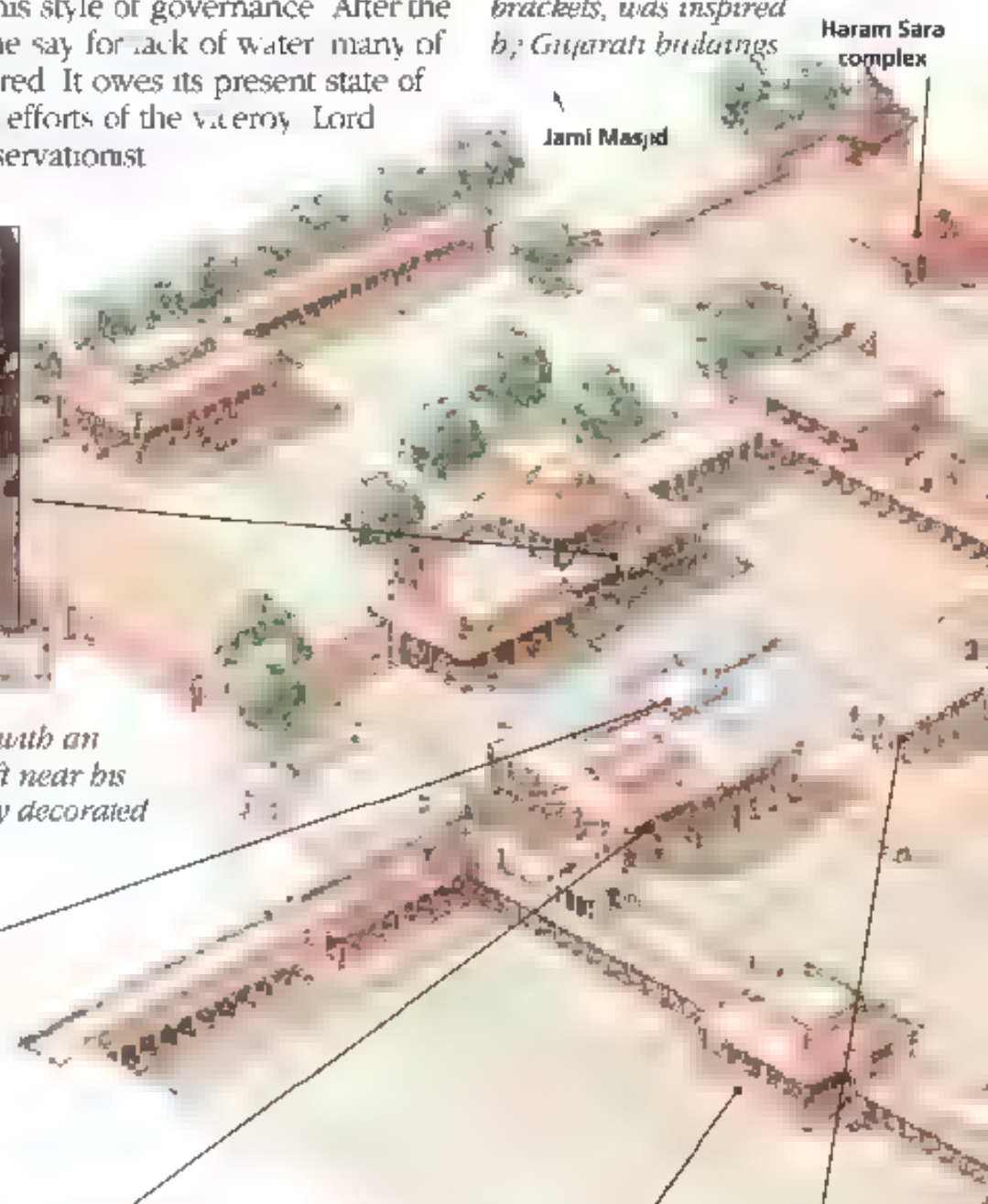
★ **Turkish Sultana's House**

The fine dado panels and delicately sculpted walls of this ornate sandstone pavilion make the stone seem like wood. It is topped with an unusual stone roof of imitator clay tiles.



Pillar in the Diwan-i-Khas

The central axis of Akbar's court, supported by carved brackets, was inspired by Gujarati buildings.



Jami Masjid

Haram Sara complex

Abdar Khana

Entrance



Diwan-i-Aam

This large courtyard with an elaborate pavilion was originally draped with rich tapestries and was used for public hearings and celebrations.



★ Panch Mahal

This five-storeyed open sandstone pavilion, overlooking the Panchisi Court, is where Akbar's queens and their attendants savoured the cool evening breezes. Its decorative screens were probably stolen after the city was abandoned.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Agra district 37 km (23 miles)
W of Agra JPTDC, 64 Taj Rd,
Agra, (0562) 236 0517 daily
 extra charges for
video photography



★ Diwan-i-Khas

This hall for private audience and debate is a unique fusion of different architectural styles and religious motifs.



Ankh Michauli

Sometimes identified as the treasury, this building has mythical guardian beasts carved on its stone struts. Its name means "blind man's buff".

Jodha Bai's
Palace

Sunehra
Makan

Birbal's
House

Panchisi Court is named after a ludo-like game played here by the ladies of the court.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Turkish Sultana's House
- ★ Panch Maha
- ★ Diwan-i-Khas

PLAN OF FATEHPUR SIKRI

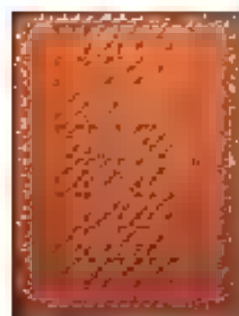


Fatehpur Sikri's royal complex contains the private and public spaces of Akbar's court, which included the harem and the treasury. The adjoining sacred complex with the Jami Masjid, Salim Chishti's Tomb and the Buland Darwaza (see p183), are separated from the royal quarters by the Badshahi Darwaza, an exclusive royal gateway.

KEY

- Area illustrated
- Other buildings
- Sacred complex (Jami Masjid)

Exploring Fatehpur Sikri



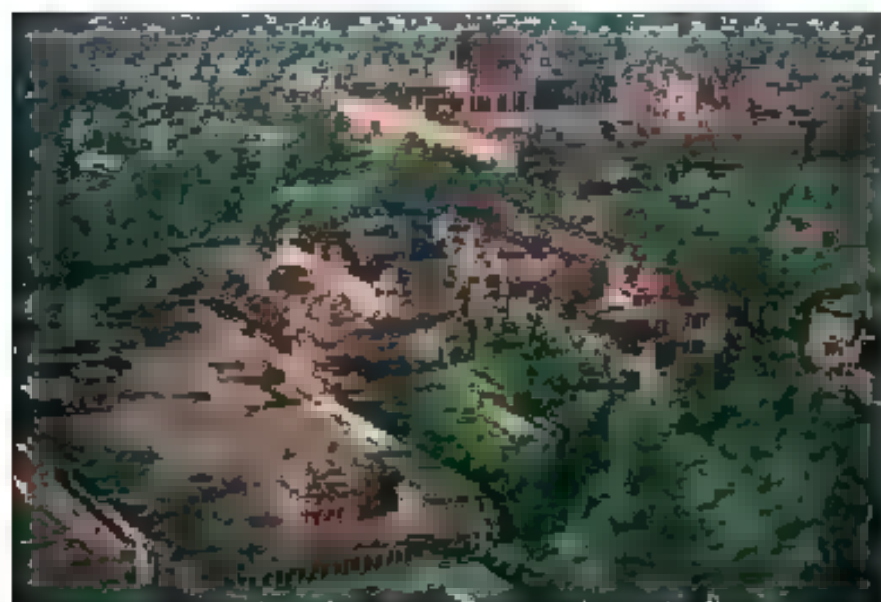
Detail of a carved panel

The principal buildings of the imperial palace complex, clustered on a series of terraces along the sandstone ridge, formed the core of Akbar's city. Stylistically, they marked the absorption of Gujarat into the Mughal Empire and reveal a successful synthesis of pre-Islamic Hindu and Jain architecture (as in the carved brackets) with the elegant domes and arches of Islamic buildings.

The concentric terraces clearly separate the public spaces from the private royal quarters. The buildings are mostly in Akbar's favourite red sandstone which was quarried from the ridge on which they stand.



Stone "tusks" on the Hiran Minar



Aerial view of Fatehpur Sikri, Emperor Akbar's grand capital

Even today, access to the city that was Akbar's capital is provided by a straight road built by the emperor, once lined with exotic bazaars. It leads visitors through the Agra Gate to the triple-arched **Naubat Khana**, where the emperor's entry used to be announced by a roll of drums. Leading off from the Naubat Khana, is the western entrance to the imperial palace complex which opens into the spacious cloistered courtyard of the **Diwan-i-Aam**, where Akbar gave public audiences. A passage behind it leads into the "inner citadel". This contains the **Diwan-i-Khas**, **Khwabgah** and **Anoop Talao** along with the treasures and the **Abdar Khana** where water and fruit for the royal household were stored. It also contains the curiously named **Turkish Sultana's House**. Though probably built for one of Akbar's wives, the identity of the "Turkish

Sultana" remains unclear. The great courtyard in front of the **Diwan-i-Khas** has the **Pachisi Court**, named after the central space that resembles the board of *pachisi*, a traditional game.

The **Haram Sara**, or harem complex, was a maze of interconnected buildings beyond Maryam's House or **Sunehra Makan** ("Golden House"), named after its rich frescoes and gilding. The massive and austere exterior of the harem leads to **Jodha Bai's Palace**, a large inner courtyard, surrounded by pavilions decorated with azure glazed tiles on the roof. A screened viaduct, presumably for privacy, connected the palace to the **Hawa Mahal** facing a small formal garden. The **Nagina Masjid**, adjoining the garden, was the royal ladies' private mosque. The two-storeyed pavilion popularly said to be

Birbal's House to the east of Jodha Bai's palace, has an unusual layout and fine carvings on its exterior and interior. Beyond this lie a large colonnaded enclosure surrounded by cells, probably meant for the servants of the harem, and the royal stables.

The **Hathi Pol** and **Sangin Burj**, the original gateways to the harem, lead to the outermost periphery of the palace complex. This was laid out in concentric circles around the inner citadel and is made up of ancillary structures, such as the caravanserais, the domed *hamams* (baths) and water-works. The **Hiran Minar** believed to be a memorial to Akbar's favourite elephant was probably an *akash deep* ("heavenly light") with lamps suspended from stone "tusks" to guide visitors.



Entrance to Birbal's House

Jami Masjid



An inlaid panel

This grand open mosque towers over the city of Fatehpur Sikri and was the model for several Mughal mosques. Flanked by arched cloisters, its vast congrega-

tional area has monumental gateways to the east and south. The spiritual focus of the complex is the tomb and hermitage of the Sufi mystic, Salim Chishti, as popular today as it was during the time of Akbar



Hujra

Symmetrically flanking the main mosque, this pair of identical cloistered prayer rooms have flat roofed pillared galleries that run round the complex.

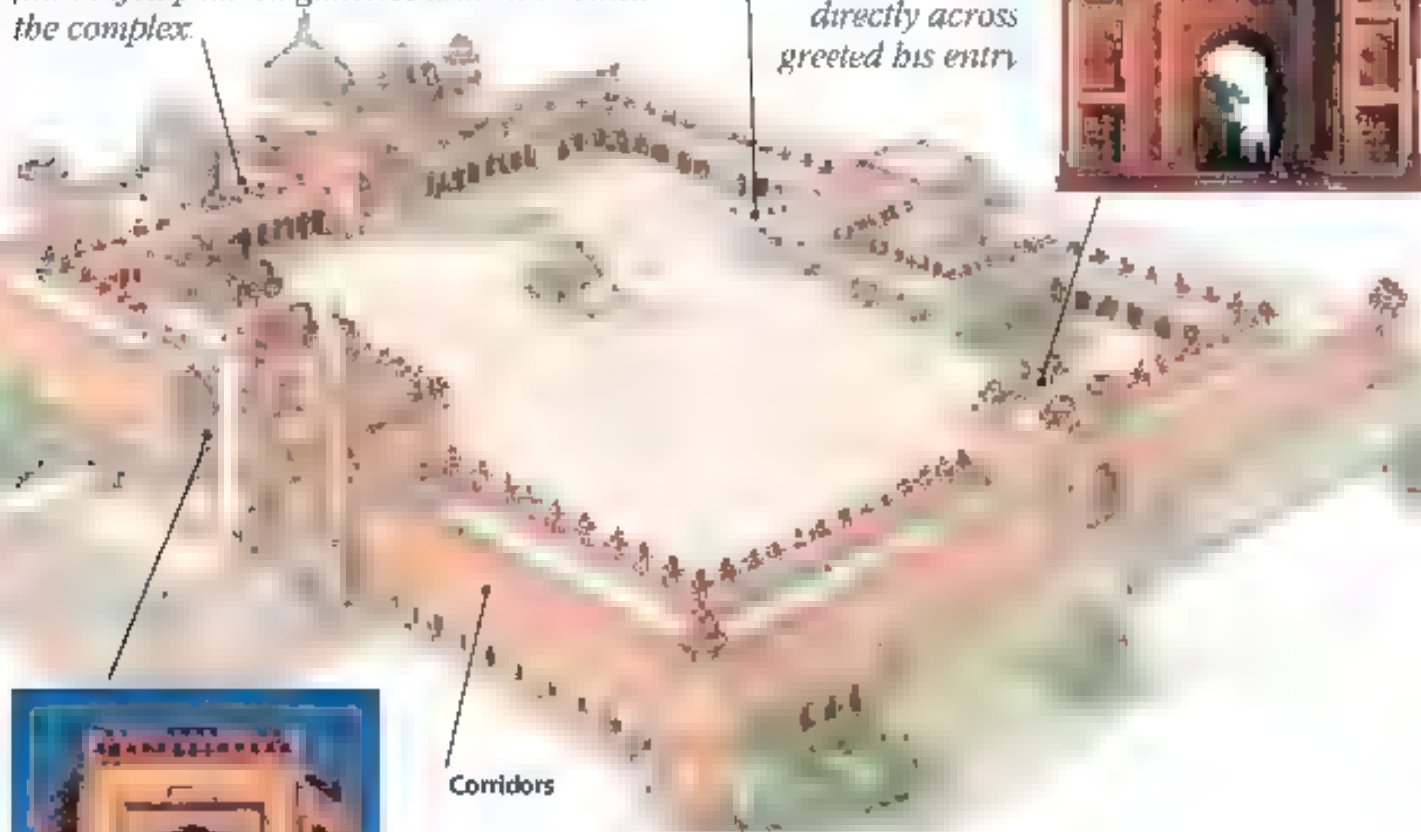


Tomb of Sheikh Salim Chishti

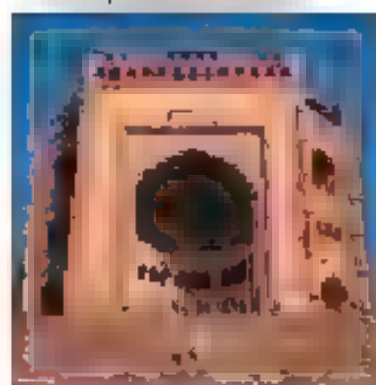
Exquisite marble serpentine brackets and almost transparent screens surround the inner tomb which has a sandalwood canopy inlaid with mother of pearl

Badshahi Darwaza

Akbar used the steep steps of this royal gateway to enter the complex. The view of the sacred mosque directly across greeted his entry.



Corridors

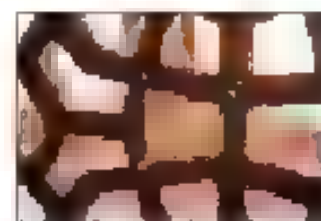


Buland Darwaza

Erected by Akbar to mark his conquest over Gujarat in 1573, this huge 54-m (177 ft) gateway later inspired other lofty gateways

MAKING A WISH IN SALIM CHISHTI'S TOMB

Ever since Akbar's childlessness was ended by the remarkable prediction of Salim Chishti in 1568, the saint's tomb has attracted crowds of supplicants, particularly childless women in search of a miracle. Visitors to the *dargah*, lavishly endowed by both Akbar and his son Jahangir, make a wish—tie a small cotton thread on the screen around the tomb, and go back confident that the saint will make it come true.



A thread tied to a screen in Chishti's tomb



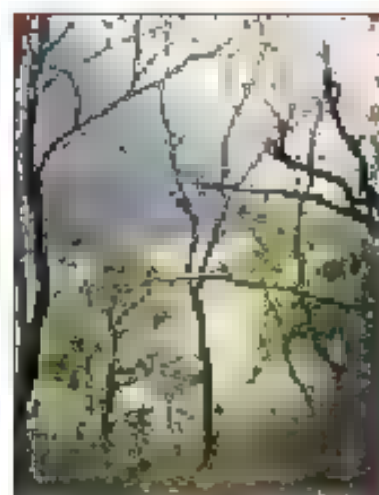
Pilgrims taking a dip in the holy Ganges at Haridwar

Haridwar ⑥

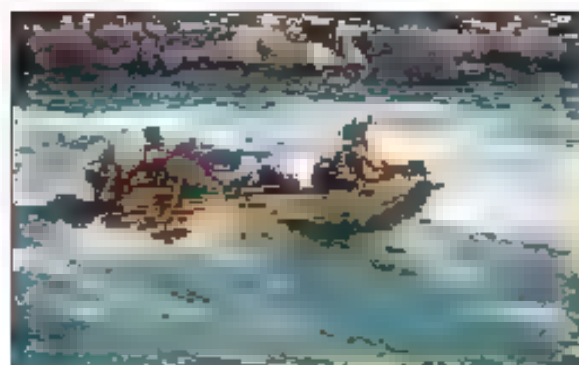
Haridwar district 214 km (133 miles)
N of Delh

River Tour along the Ganges 8

From September to April, the Ganges, swollen by the monsoon rains of the upper catchment areas, becomes a torrent, gushing over rocky boulders as it hurries out of the mountains to the plains. During this period a few stretches of rapids, where the flow is rough but safe, become a popular circuit for enthusiasts of white-water rafting. Only organized tours, run by certified experts, are allowed. For the less adventurous, a scenic driving tour meanders through this valley of the sages, whose ashrams nestle in the surrounding forests along the holy river.



The Ganges flowing serenely through a forested valley



Kaudiyala ①

The most popular starting point of the river tour, Kaudiyala has camp sites on the river bank.

Marine Drive ②

This camp site is named after a Mumbai promenade (see p455), famous for its views.

Shivpuri ③

One of the most scenic camp sites, Shivpuri is also the seat of a Glass House on the Ganges (see p466), offering splendid views of the river.

Brahmapuri ④

This camp is also the location of an ashram, one of many along the Ganges.

Lakshman Jhula ⑤

A modern suspension bridge (jhula) across the Ganges replaced the old rope bridge in 1929. This lies at the northern end of Rishikesh and offers fine views of the river.

Rishikesh ⑥

An ancient spiritual centre, Rishikesh is serenely located on the banks of the Ganges amid lush wooded hills.

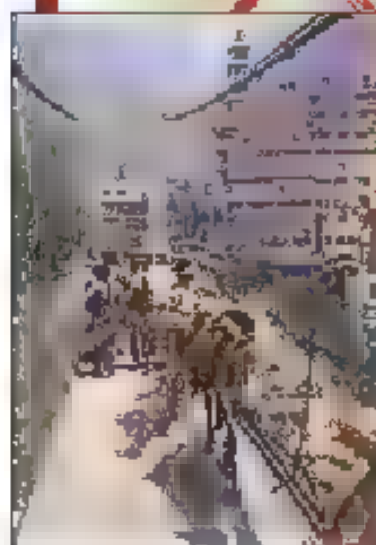


KEY

- Tour route
- Road
- River
- * Viewpoint
- X Rapids
- A Camp

TIPS FOR RAFTERS

Length: 36 km (22 miles)
Getting around: Rafting can be done over two or three days, with night halts at camps situated at Kaudiyala, Marine Drive, Shivpuri and Brahmapuri. A shorter tour of the same stretch can also be done in one day. For organized tours, tour operators and equipment hire (see p755).





The façade of the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, established in 1914

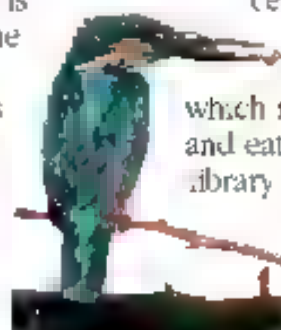
Dehra Dun 9

Dehra Dun district, 256 km (159 miles) NE of Delhi 447,800 toll, Grant, 24 km (15 miles) SE of town centre. GMVN, 74r1, Rajpur Road, (0135) 274 7898

Fringed by the Shivalik Hills Dehra Dun lies in the pretty Doon Valley, flanked by the Ganges to the west and the Yamuna to the east. The provisional capital of the newly-formed state of Uttaranchal, the town is also the gateway to the Garhwal Hills. A number of prestigious institutions have their headquarters here, such as the Survey of India and the Forest Research Institute. India's very own Eton, the Doon School as well as the country's foremost training academy for army officers, the Indian Military Academy, are also situated here. Rajpur Road, the main link to the hills, is lined with bakeries and restaurants and has the old Clock Tower, the town's principal landmark, at one end. Dehra Dun's bracing climate and its proximity to Mussoorie, make it a popular retirement retreat. The Doon Valley is also famous for its fragrant basmati rice, and its mango and aitchi orchards.

Environs

The **Rajaji National Park**, 5 km (3 miles) southeast of Dehra Dun, is a picturesque wildlife sanctuary covering over 800 sq km (309 sq miles). It is best known for its wildlife and herds of elephants



Little blue kingfisher

Mussoorie 10

Uttarkashi district, 35 km (22 miles) N of Dehra Dun 26,000 Jtaranchal Tourist Bureau, The Mall, (0135) 263 2663

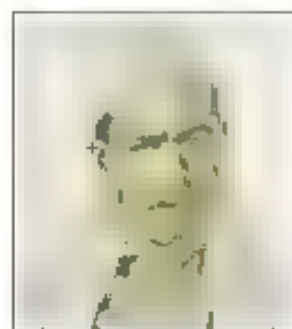
One of the Raj's most popular summer retreats, Mussoorie is perched on a horseshoe-shaped ridge above the Doon Valley at a height of 1,920 m (6,299 ft), and is inundated with Indian visitors in summer. Life in Mussoorie centres around The Mall, the main thoroughfare, which is lined with shops and eating places. The old library lies at the town's western end. About 7 km (4 miles) farther west, is a house known as **Everest House**. This was the home of Sir George Everest, the legendary Surveyor-General who mapped Mount Everest,

and one of Mussoorie's earliest residents. The town's small Tibetan community is settled in **Happy Valley** close to Convent Hill. The **Tibetan Market**, below The Mall, sells a range of wooliens. A ropeway from The Mall leads up to **Gun Hill**, which, on a clear day, has fine views of many Greater Himalayan peaks, including Nanda Devi, Kedarnath and Badrinath (see pp64–5). **Camel's Back Road** named after a distinctively shaped rock, offers a pleasant walk along the upper ridge, and **Kempty Falls** lying 12 km (8 miles) northwest of town, is a popular picnic spot.

Landour, a short distance east of Kulu bazaar, was originally a barracks and convalescence area for British soldiers. With its colonial bungalows and relative quiet, it has managed to preserve some of Mussoorie's old character and is the town's prettiest quarter.

THE PUNDITS

Up to the mid 19th-century, Tibet and Central Asia were vast blanks on the map of the world, yet strategically important to the British in their rivalry with Imperial Russia. As foreigners were forbidden from entering these lands, between 1865 and 1885, the Survey of India trained and sent an intrepid group of Indians to survey the region. Known as the Pundits, these men went disguised as



A portrait of Nain Singh (1830–95)

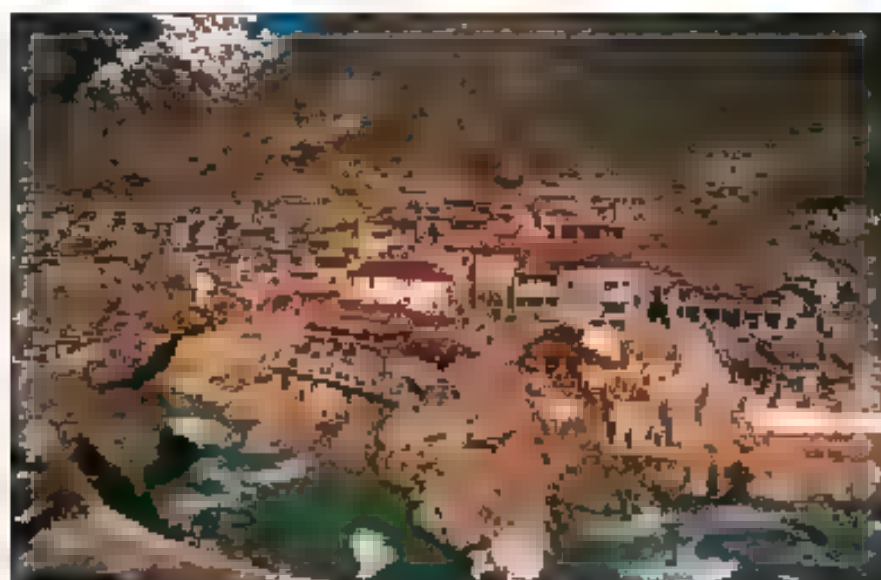
Buddhist pilgrims and traders, with compasses and survey notes concealed in their prayer wheels, and mercury thermometers hidden in their hollowed-out pilgrims' staffs. The beads of a rosary helped them measure the distance they covered every day. The most remarkable of the Pundits was Nain Singh, who brought back invaluable and accurate topographical information on large tracts of Tibet.

The Garhwal Hills 11

Uttarkashi and Chamoli districts. 148 km (92 miles) N from Rishikesh to Uttarkashi.  Uttarakhand Tourist Bureau, Uttarkashi, (01374) 274 767

The northern stretches of Garhwal (Uttarakhand's western hills) are strewn with pilgrim towns, ancient shrines and forbidding snowbound peaks. **Uttarkashi**, the main town, lies 148 km (92 miles) north of Rishikesh (see p184) and is an important starting point for treks to the upper reaches of Garhwal. A leading school for aspiring climbers, the **Nehru Institute of Mountaineering** is situated in this town and boasts of having trained Bachendri Pal, the first Indian woman to scale Mount Everest in 1984.

This region also encompasses an area traditionally known as *Dev Bhoomi* ("Abode of the Gods"). The Char Dham or four major places of pilgrimage, **Gangotri**, **Yamunotri**, **Kedarnath** and **Badrinath**, are all situated here at altitudes over 3,100 m (10,171 ft) in the shadow of some awe-inspiring Himalayan peaks. The pilgrimage season lasts from April to early November, after which the snows drive away all but the most devout. All four sites can be reached



Badrinath, Garhwal's foremost *dham* and source of the Alaknanda river

from Uttarkashi, Haridwar and Rishikesh.

Yamunotri, 209 km (130 miles) north of Rishikesh, is the source of the Yamuna, and a 13-km (8-mile) walk from Hanuman Chatti. Its temple was rebuilt in the 20th century after the earlier one was destroyed by floods. The small village of Gangotri, named after the Ganges which flows through it, lies 100 km (62 miles) northeast of Uttarkashi. Its 18th-century temple has images of Hindu deities.

Gaumukh, the source of River Ganges, lies 18 km (11 miles) upstream, below the soaring Bhagirathi peaks, and can be reached via a path that follows the lovely river valley. At this point, the river is known as the Bhagirathi, and only becomes the Ganges proper after it joins the Alaknanda river at **Devprayag** (see p162).

The impressive Kedarnath peaks form the backdrop for the pilgrim town of Kedarnath, sacred to Shiva, and 223 km (139 miles) northeast of Rishikesh. A beautifully carved stone temple, said to be 800 years o.d., lies 4 km (9 miles) north of the road head at Gaumukh.

The most visited of all the Char Dham shrines, **Badrinath** is situated 298 km (185 miles) northeast of Rishikesh. Its colourfully painted temple,

dedicated to Vishnu, is

usually packed with pilgrims. The town has a spectacular setting, wedged between the Nair and Narayan ranges. The Neelkanth or "Blue Throat Peak" named after Lord Shiva, towers over Badrinath at a height of 6,957 m (22,825 ft).

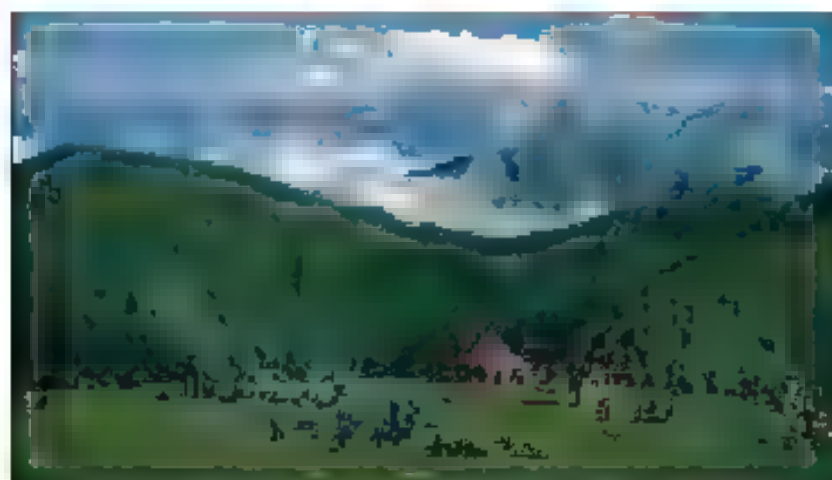


A mendicant in saffron robes

Joshimath, lying 250 km (155 miles) northeast of Rishikesh at the confluence of the Dhaut Ganga and Alaknanda rivers at Vishnuprayag, is one of the four *mathas* (seats of learning) established by the great 9th-century sage, Adi Shankaracharya (see p648). It is also the junction of two ancient trans-Himalayan trading routes. The town was a gateway to the Nanda Devi Sanctuary (see p189), until the sanctuary was closed to the public in 1983. Today, visitors head mostly for the ski slopes of **Auli**, reached via road or cable car from Joshimath. The popular trek to the Sikh shrine of **Hemkund Sahib** and the **Valley of Flowers National Park** (see p189) begins 20 km (12 miles) north of Joshimath, from Ghangaria. The Valley of Flowers, best visited between the months of June and September, is a carpet of anemones, roses, primulas and other alpine flora.



Gaumukh, the glacial source of the Ganges, backed by the Bhagirathi peaks



The Curzon Trail

The 70-km (44-mile) trail is named after the British viceroy who followed this route. From Ghat, it skirts the western edge of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, crossing over the Kuari Pass, with clear views of Nanda Devi. It ends at Tapovan, 12 km (8 mile) northwest of Joshimath.

Duration: 6 days

Altitude: 4,268 m (14,003 ft)

Level of Difficulty: tough

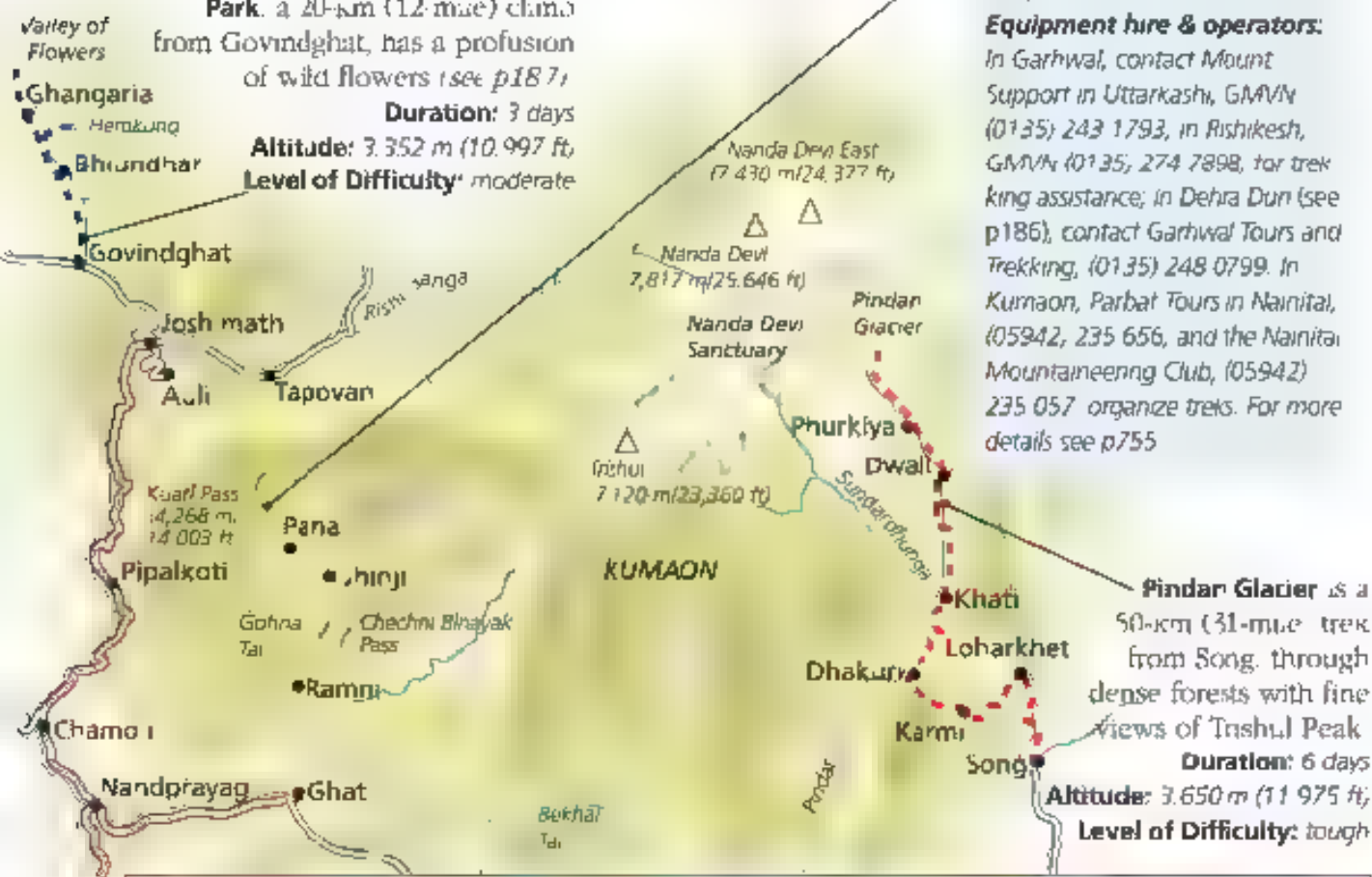
The Valley of Flowers National Park

a 20-km (12-mile) climb from Govindghat, has a profusion of wild flowers (see p187).

Duration: 3 days

Altitude: 3,352 m (10,997 ft)

Level of Difficulty: moderate



TIPS FOR WALKERS

Be prepared: Acclimatization is essential for altitudes over 3,000 m (9,843 ft). See p767 for information on altitude sickness. For longer routes, guides are necessary. For more details on trekking see p751.

On the trek: Drink plenty of water. Carry a first aid kit and cooking fuel. Never burn wood, which is a scarce resource. Put out all fires properly, leaving no burning embers. Do not litter, and carry your rubbish back with you.

Permits: In Garhwal, travel permits are required for border areas which can be obtained from the District Magistrate's Office in Uttarkashi, (01374) 222 280 or the GMVN, Rishikesh, (0135) 243 1793. No permits are required for Kumaon. For more information see p758.

Equipment hire & operators:

In Garhwal, contact Mount Support in Uttarkashi, GMVN (0135) 243 1793, in Rishikesh, GMVN (0135) 274 7898, for trekking assistance; in Dehra Dun (see p186), contact Garhwal Tours and Trekking, (0135) 248 0799. In Kumaon, Parbat Tours in Nainital, (05942) 235 656, and the Nainital Mountaineering Club, (05942) 235 057 organize treks. For more details see p755.

Pindar Glacier is a 50-km (31-mile) trek from Song, through dense forests with fine views of Trishul Peak.

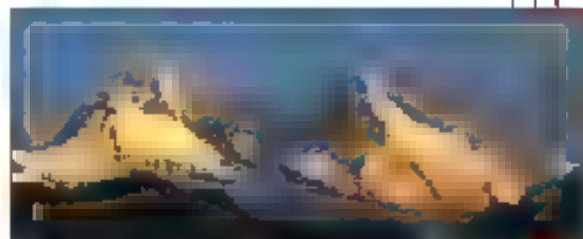
Duration: 6 days

Altitude: 3,650 m (11,975 ft)

Level of Difficulty: tough



NANDA DEVI SANCTUARY

The 630-sq km (243-sq mile) Nanda Devi Sanctuary has three splendid peaks—Nanda Devi, Nanda Devi East and Nanda Kot—which form a snowy wall in the north. Nanda Devi (see pp64–5) is India's second highest peak at 7,817 m (25,646 ft). Believed to be the birthplace of Shiva's consort, Parvati, the mountain is revered as a goddess. The area was thought to be impenetrable till British mountaineers Eric Shipton and B.J. Tilman discovered a route in 1936. A spate of expeditions followed to the distress of the local people who believed this would incur the wrath of the goddess. In 1976, American mountaineer Willi Unsoeld, along with his 22-year-old daughter Nanda Devi (whom he had named after the peak), set off for the mountain, but Nanda Devi died tragically during the expedition. The core area of the sanctuary was closed in 1983 to protect its fragile ecosystem, which is the habitat of rare fauna such as the snow leopard and the monal pheasant.



Nanda Devi and Nanda Devi East

Nainital 12

Nainital district 32.2 km (200 miles) NE of Delhi.  Kathgodam, 35 km (22 miles) S of Nainital, then taxi or bus.  KMVN, Om Park, (05942) 231 436.

This pretty hill station, nestled in the Kumaon Hills, is named after the emerald green eyes (*naina*) of Parvati, Shiva's consort. A temple dedicated to the goddess stands on the northern shore of the large freshwater lake (*tal*). The old summer capital of the British Raj's United Provinces, Nainital is today part of the newly-formed state of Uttarakhand. The lake is encircled by the Mall Road, and the "flats", a large field which is a popular promenade and recreation centre. The **Boat House Club**, set up in 1890 on the water's edge, is the hub of many activities and has a number of sail boats and rubber dinghies for hire. The many attractive colonial buildings include the governor's summer residence (built in 1899), St Joseph's School, the old Secretariat (now the Uttarakhand High Court) and the Municipal Library. **St-John-in-the-Wilderness** is an evocatively named Gothic church, with fine stained-glass windows and dark wooden pews. Nainital also has some beautiful walking trails, one of which leads up from the flats,



The lake at Nainital, with facilities for boating and water sports





The 11th-century complex of stone temples at Jageshwar, near Almora

through the densely wooded Ayarpata Hills, to **Tiffin Top** and **Dorothy's Seat**, lookout points offering panoramic views of the lakeside. Close by, and almost hidden by the forest, is an old public school, the appropriately named **Sherwood College**. The Upper Cheena Mall leads to Naina Peak, with breathtaking views of the mountain ranges. Less energetic visitors can take the cable car up to **Snow View** for scenic views

Environs

Described as India's Lake District, Nainital's environs have a number of serene lakes surrounded by thick forests. Excursions are offered to **Bhim Tal**, 22 km (14 miles) east of Nainital. **Naukuchiya Tal**, just 4 km (2.5 miles) from Bhim Tal, is a lake with nine corners, rich in bird life, and **Sat Tal**, a conglomeration of seven lakes, located 21 km (13 miles) northeast of Nainital. **Mukteshwar**, 30 km (19 miles) northeast of Nainital, is one of the most beautiful spots in the area, along with the orchards at **Ramgarh**, close by.

Almora 13

Almora district 285 km (177 miles) NE of Delhi.  Kathgodam, 90 km (56 miles) S of Almora, then taxi or bus.  KMVN, Holiday Home, (05962) 230 250.

The large market town of Almora is the headquarters of the surrounding district. Its curving ridge offers

expansive views of the spectacular Greater Himalayan Range, including peaks such as Trishul and the spectacular Nanda Devi (see p189). The crowded street of Almora's distinctive bazaar lies above The Mall, where locally crafted *tamta* products (hand-beaten copper and brass utensils plated with silver) are on sale. The town's trademark confectionery, the *bal mithai*, is available here as well.

Also of interest are the tall narrow houses with their delicately carved wooden façades, a hallmark of local architecture. The historic **Almora Jail**, probably one of the few in the country with such picturesque surroundings, once held important political prisoners such as

Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. A number of temples dot the landscape, the most popular of these are the **Chitai Temple** and the **Udyotchandeshwar Temple**. On the western edge of town, **Brighton End Corner** has fine mountain views.

Environs

Binsar, 34 km (21 miles) northeast of Almora, at an altitude of 2,412 m (7,913 ft), is a wonderful spot from which to view the mountains. The steep drive up through tangy forests of pine is very pretty, and there is a 13th-century Shiva Temple set in the forest, just short of the summit **Jageshwar**, located 34 km (21 miles) east of Almora, is of great religious significance. This is an



Sculpture, Jageshwar



Ranikhet's nine-hole golf course, offering fine mountain views

impressive complex of over 100 splendidly carved stone temples, dating back to the 11th century

Ranikhet 14

Almora district, 367 km (228 miles), NE of Delhi. Tourist Reception Centre, Mall Rd (05966) 220 893

Primarily a cantonment town, Ranikhet is home to the Indian Army's renowned Kumaon Regiment. Not surprisingly, the army is the town's most visible presence: its many red-roofed bungalows spreading across the wide "Queen's Field", a literal translation of the town's name. **Sadar Bazaar** is the main market, while the **Upper Mall** leads away from the bazaar to the quieter part of town. **Chaubatia**, once a British sanatorium, lies further along The Mall and now houses the Government Fruit Garden, which grows 200 varieties of fruit. Ranikhet's true allure, however, lies in its untrammelled Himalayan views that offer a spectacular vista of nearly 350 km (217 miles) of the Greater Himalayan Range. The **Army Golf Course**, 6 km (4 miles) down the Almora Road at Uphat, is one of the country's highest golf courses, and was originally a racetrack. It welcomes visitors who are willing to pay green fees, so take no notice of the signboard that threatens trespassers.

Lansdowne 15

Almora district, 216 km (134 miles), NE of Delhi. Kotdwar, 37 km (23 miles), SW of town centre, then taxi or bus

The cantonment town of Lansdowne is one of the few hill stations that has managed to remain wonderfully unchanged over the last century. Away from the main tourist circuit, the town has been spared the frenzied building and modernization that has crept into other popular destinations. A loosely spread-out amble of bungalows and shops, it is set on gentle forested slopes of pine, deodar and silver oak. The Army's Garhwal Rifles have their regimental centre here, and a visit to the beautifully maintained regimental mess is a must. A pleasant walk leads to **Tip-n-Top**, a lookout point 3 km (2 miles) from town, which offers excellent mountain views.



A green bee-eater with its catch

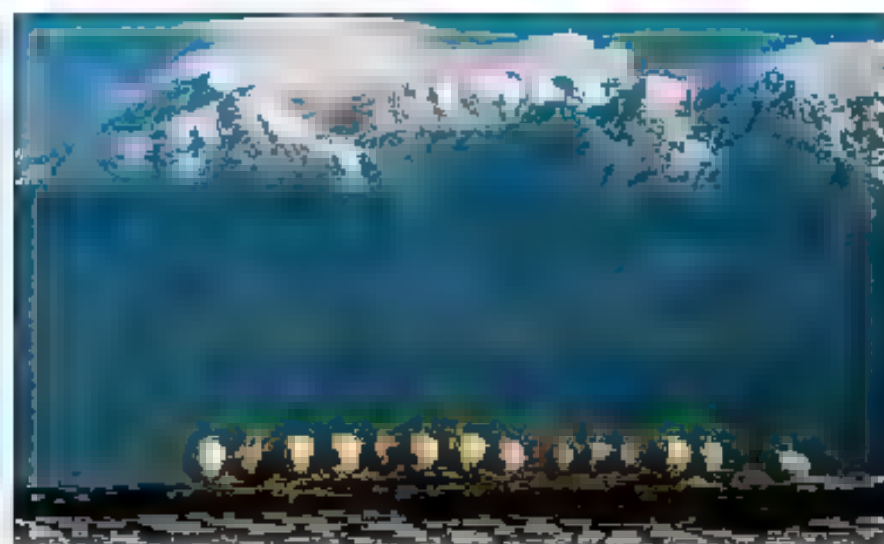
Kausani 16

Almora district, 385 km (239 miles), NE of Delhi. Tourist Reception Centre, (05962) 258 006

Kausani was Mahatma Gandhi's favourite abode in the hills. After a long stay here at the **Anashakti Yoga Ashram** in 1929, he remarked on how unnecessary it was for Indians to visit the European Alps for their health, when they had the beauty of Kausani at their doorsteps. A 400-km (249-mile) uninterrupted panorama of the Nanda Devi Range can be seen from the old **Circuit House**.

Environs

Bainnath, 20 km (12 miles) north of Kausani, is known for a cluster of temples, now in ruins, built in the 11th century. The main attraction is the **Parvati Temple**, with a 2-m (7 ft) high image of the goddess, dating from the 12th century. **Bageshwar**, 41 km (26 miles) east of Kausani, lies at the confluence of the Gomti and Saryu rivers, and was once a major trading post between Tibet and Kumaon. Although the link with Tibet no longer exists, local merchants still bring wool and animal hide to the town's annual Uttari Fair. With its stone temples dedicated to Shiva, Bageshwar is also an important pilgrimage centre in Kumaon. Nila Parvat (the "Blue Mountain"), stands proudly between the two rivers, and locals believe that it is home to all the 330 million deities of the Hindu pantheon. Many visitors to Bageshwar are en route to the Pindari Glacier (see p189).



Pumpkins drying on a slate roof below the peaks at Kausani

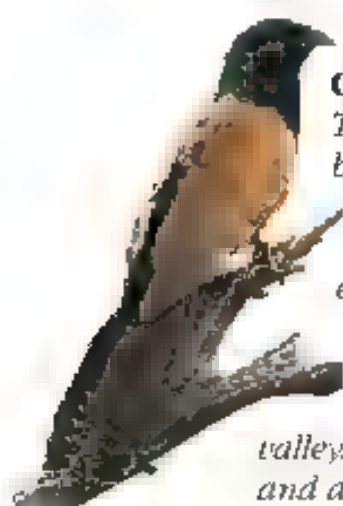
Corbett National Park 17

Situated along the valley of the Ramganga river and fringed by the Himalayan foothills in the north, Corbett is considered one of India's finest wildlife sanctuaries. The 1,318-sq km (509-sq mile) reserve was originally a hunter's paradise during the British Raj. In 1936, it became India's first national park, largely due to the efforts of the great British hunter-turned-conservationist Jim Corbett, after whom the park is named. The park encompasses varied terrain, from savannah grasslands to hilly ridges of deciduous forests with *chir* pine and *sal* (*Shorea robusta*). Corbett is renowned for its remarkable variety of wildlife, notably tigers, elephants, *chausingha* (four-horned antelopes) and an astonishing 600 species of birds.



Paradise Flycatcher

The male has beautiful plumage and measures 50 cm (20 in.) in length.



Coucal or Crow Pheasant

This striking black and brown bird is found all over northern India. Its loud and resonant call echoes over the valleys and forests in and around Corbett.



Grasslands

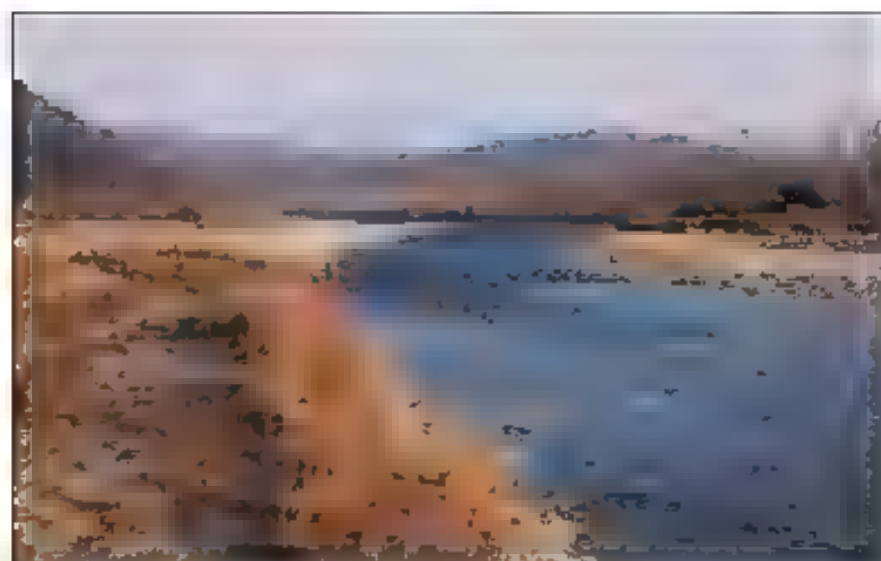
Vast savannah grasslands (chaurs), ideal for viewing deer and other wildlife, surround Dhikala, the park's hub, located by the Ramganga Reservoir.

Gharial

The gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is a species that can be seen on the banks of the Ramganga Reservoir (formed by a dam on the Ramganga river). The reservoir also attracts a variety of water birds such as geese, ducks, grebes and storks.



Machans or high watchtowers, situated around the park, are ideal for viewing wildlife.



Ramganga River

The lifeline of the park's wildlife, the Ramganga river is surrounded by tall elephant grass (nall) and scrub

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Pauri Garhwal & Nainital districts
436 km (271 miles) NW of Luck-
now **Entry points:** Dhangarhi &
Katagarh. Ramnagar, 20 km
(12 miles) S of Dhangarhi

For bookings and permits
contact Ramnagar (05947)

251 225 Nov-Jun

extra charges for video.



Elephant Safari

The highlights of a trip
to Corbett are the sunrise
and sunset elephant safaris
available from Dhikala and
Bijran. Apart from the
herds of wild elephants
and deer, it is sometimes
possible to encounter a
lone tiger or leopard



Indian Tiger

Corbett has about 140 tigers. It
became India's first Tiger Reserve
in 1973, under the aegis of
Project Tiger (see p.289)



KEY

Park boundary

Trail

Major road

Minor road

Tourist information

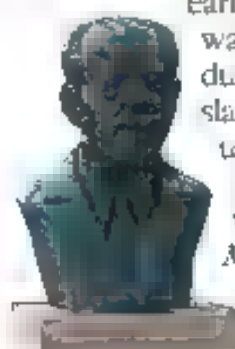
Viewpoint

Café

Accommodation




JIM CORBETT (1875–1955)

Jim Corbett was born in Nainital and developed a keen interest in the jungles of Kumaon. An avid hunter in his early years (he shot his first leopard when he was eight), the turning point came when, on a duck shoot, he was appalled by the mindless slaughter of 300 birds. Corbett then decided to use his rifle solely to kill the man-eating leopards and tigers that plagued the nearby villages. Riveting accounts in his first book, *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, describe how he tracked and shot the dreaded Champawat tigress who had killed 434 people. In 1956, after Corbett's death, the park was named after him as a tribute to his pioneering efforts at conservation.



Bust of Corbett,
Dhikala

Dudhwa National Park 18

Lakhimpur-Kher district 220 km (137 miles) N of Lucknow. **Entry point:** Palia.    For bookings contact Field Director, Dudhwa, (05872) 252 106.

 15 Nov–15 June   extra charges. Jeeps available 

Located close to the border with Nepal, Dudhwa National Park covers 490 sq km (189 sq miles) of densely wooded plains. Its forests have some of the finest specimens of *sal* trees in India. In 1988, Dudhwa was recognized as a Tiger Reserve mainly due to the efforts of Bily Arjan Singh, a legendary environmentalist. Arjan Singh is best known for the tigress, Tara, he hand-reared and returned to the wild in 1978.

Today, the park has more than 30 tigers. The park is also well known for its herds of swamp deer (*Cervus duvauceli*). Better known as *barasingha* (literally 12-antlered), these deer find their ideal habitat in the grassy wetlands in the southern reaches of the park.




Other species include leopards, sloth bears and a small herd of rhinos, brought here from Assam and Nepal, in an attempt to re-introduce the species into Dudhwa. The park is also home to nearly 100 species of birds, among them swamp partridges, lesser floricans and hornbills. The park's lakes attract waterfowl such as fishing eagles and ibis.



Swamp deer, also known as *barasingha*, in Dudhwa's grasslands

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp695–7 and pp724–6

Rampur 19

Rampur district 310 km (193 miles) NW of Lucknow.  281 500  

Earlier a stronghold of the Afghan Rohilla chieftains (highlanders from Peshawar), Rampur became a princely state under the British. It was ruled by a dynasty of Muslim nawabs who were great connoisseurs of the arts. They drew hundreds of scholars and artists to their court whose books and paintings became part of the state collection. They also established a famous *gharana* (school) of classical music. The Hamra Manzil, built by Nawab Hamid Ali Khan Bahadar who came to the throne in 1896, now houses the renowned **Raza Library**, which has a collection of almost 1000 Mughal miniatures, over 11000 books, numerous rare manuscripts, and portraits dating from the 16th to 18th centuries. It is not officially open to the public, but permission to visit can be obtained from the curator. Hamid Ali Khan was also responsible for renovating many of Rampur's palaces, including the sprawling palace and fort complex to the northwest of the town. Rampur is a maze of bazaars and was once known for its fine cotton *kites* (Jamask). Traces of its Rohilla warrior ancestry are visible in

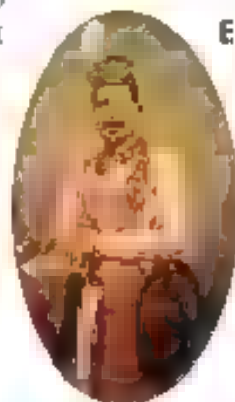


Rampur knives and daggers, a local speciality

the famous daggers, always on sale, and in the touches of Pashto, the native tongue of Peshawar, which pepper the Urdu that is spoken here.

Raza Library

For permission to visit contact the curator. **Tel** (0592) 232 5045, 232 5346




Nawab Hamid Ali of Rampur

Environs

The town of **Moradabad**, lying 36 km (16 miles) west of Rampur, is a small 17th-century settlement, best known for its brass and metalware industries. The town's fort and mosque are almost hidden by the many tenements and bazaars.

Aligarh 20

Aligarh district 371 km (231 miles) NW of Lucknow.  667 700    Numaish (Feb).

Historically important because of its location in an agriculturally rich region, Aligarh was a Rajput stronghold from the end of the 12th century onwards, until it was wrested by the Mughals. Its fort, which dates to 1524, fell to the British under Lord Lake in 1803. British presence influenced many of its foremost citizens, such as Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan who founded the **Aligarh Muslim University** in 1875, for which the town is most famous today. The sprawling campus has many

imposing buildings, such as a mosque that is an exact replica of the Jami Masjid (see p86) in Delhi, only one-third its size.

Jhansi ㊦

Jhansi district 301 km (187 miles)
SW of Lucknow ㊦ 383,200 ㊦ ㊦
㊦ JP Tourism, Shivpur Rd, (0517) 244 1267 ㊦ Jhansi Festival (Feb).

Most famous for the role that its queen, Rani Lakshmbai played during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Jhansi is a key transit point for visitors traveling from Delhi to the temples of Khajuraho (see pp236-8). The main site of interest is **Shankar Fort**, built in 1613 by Raja Bir Singh Deo. It has 9-m (30-ft) high walls built in concentric rings around its centre and offers fine views from its ramparts.

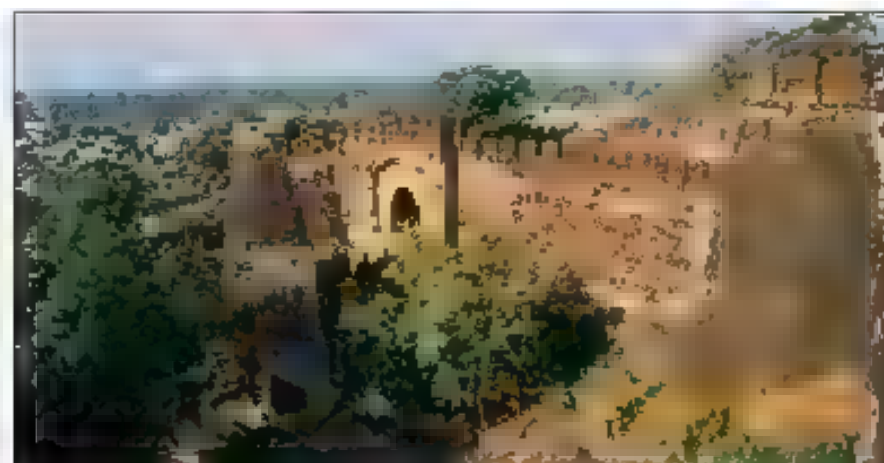
The **Archaeological Museum**, located outside the fort on the road back to town, has medieval Hindu sculpture, royal artifacts, and some prehistoric tools.

㊦ **Archaeological Museum**
㊦ Tue-Sun. ㊦ 2nd Sat. ㊦ ㊦
extra charges for video photography

Kanpur ㊦

Kanpur district 79 km (49 miles) SW of Lucknow ㊦ 2,532,100 ㊦ ㊦

One of British India's largest garrisons, Kanpur, or Cawnpore as it was then known, witnessed some of



The ramparts of Shankar Fort at Jhansi, stormed by British forces in 1858

the bloodiest battles in 1857. More than 1,000 British soldiers and civilians were killed when Nana Sahib, the Maratha ruler, broke the British siege held by General Sir Hugh Wheeler in June 1857. When British reinforcements arrived, equally ferocious reprisals occurred.

Today, Kanpur is an industrial city with leather, cotton and oil as its main products. The old garrison, now an enclave of the armed forces, has some interesting relics of the Raj. Among them is the **All Souls' Memorial Church**, a grand Gothic style structure with an intricate stained-glass window over the west door. Built after 1857, it is a memorial to those killed during the siege. East of the church, the pretty **Memorial Garden** has a statue of an angel surrounded by a Gothic screen. This statue originally stood at the site of a terrible massacre, where British women and children were hacked and thrown down a well near Bibighar. In the

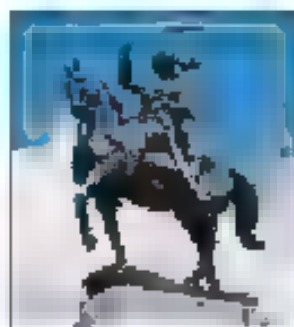
town's centre, Northeast of the church, **Sati Chaura Ghat** along the Ganges is the spot where Indian forces killed 500 British soldiers and civilians. The **Military Cemetery** on the edge of the cantonment has many interesting graves, while in the town, the **King Edward VII Memorial Hall** and **Christ Church** (built in 1844) are also worth visiting.

Environs

Bithur 25 km (16 miles) west of Kanpur boasts a fort built by the Peshwas (see p171). It is also the legendary birthplace of Lav and Kashi, the twin sons of Rama and Sita (see p27). About 60 km (37 miles) south of Kanpur lies the beautiful 5th-century brick temple at **Bhitargaon**, built by the Gupta kings. The only one of its kind still surviving, most of the relief panels on the temple have vanished, but some terracotta sculptures inside remain.

RANI LAKSHMIBAI OF JHANSI

India's Joan of Arc, Rani Lakshmbai single-handedly defied the British when her husband, Raja Gangadhar Rao, died in 1853 leaving no adult heir. She wished to rule as Regent but the British invoked the infamous Doctrine of Lapse (see



Rani Lakshmbai astride her horse

p53) and she was driven from her kingdom. While the Indian Mutiny of 1857 brewed in the north, the queen and her general, Tantia Tope, captured Gwalior Fort. She died defending it at Kotah-Sarai near Gwalior in 1858. According to the historian Christopher Hibbert, "she died dressed as a man, holding her sword two-handed and the reins of her horse in her teeth." She remains one of India's best-loved heroines.



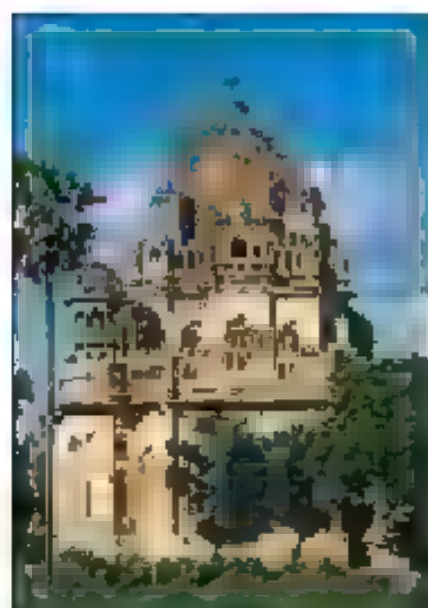
Stained-glass window in the All Souls' Memorial Church, Kanpur

Lucknow ❷



The fish emblem
of the nawabs

As the Mughal Empire disintegrated, many independent kingdoms, such as Avadh, were established. Its capital, Lucknow, rose to prominence when Asaf-ud-Daula, the fourth nawab, shifted his court here from Faizabad (see p199) in 1775. The city was also a great cultural centre, and its nawabs, best remembered for their refined and extravagant lifestyles, were patrons of the arts. Under them music and dance flourished, and many buildings were erected. In 1856 the British annexed Lucknow and deposed its last nawab, Wajid Ali Shah. This incident helped instigate the Indian Mutiny of 1857, when the city witnessed one of the bloodiest episodes in colonial history.



View of the Tomb of Khurshid Zadi,
Qaiser Bagh

❶ Qaiser Bagh Palace

Qaiser Bagh. ☐ daily

Once the most magnificent palace in Lucknow, Qaiser Bagh, was built by Wajid Ali Shah (r 1847–56), the last nawab. When the British recaptured Lucknow in 1858 they demolished many of the complex's more fanciful structures, with their florid sculptures of mermaids and cherubs. However, the remaining buildings, although in ruins, hint at their former splendour. The **Lal Baradari** now houses a fine arts academy as well as the archaeological section of the State Museum; the **Pathar Wali Baradari** is a school for Hindustani music, and the **Safaid Baradari** now an office building, was where the nawab, dressed as a fakir, used to hold court. Only two wings of the residential quarters that once housed the

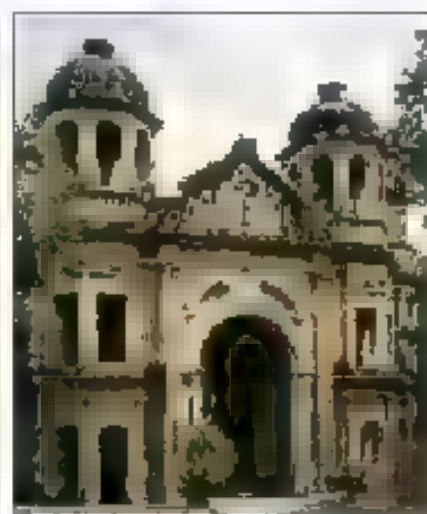
nawab's vast harem remain. Carvings of fish, the nawabs' royal emblem, adorn many of the structures. Nearby, the two grand tombs – the **Tomb of Saadat Ali Khan** (the fifth nawab) and the **Tomb of Khurshid Zadi**, his wife

Under Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, Lucknow witnessed an artistic flowering. An aesthete who was not interested in governance, he devoted himself to poetry and music and is believed to have introduced the *thumri* (a form of light classical music). Dance forms benefited as well, and the Lucknow *gharana* school of Kathak (see p28) reached new heights during his short reign, before he was deposed by the British in 1856 and exiled to Calcutta.

❷ Sikander Bagh

Sikander Bagh. ☐ daily

Named after Wajid Ali Shah's favourite queen, Sikander Bagh was the royal pleasure garden of the nawabs. In 1857 British troops led by Sir Colin Campbell relieved the



Sikander Bagh's stately gateway,
adorned with the fish emblem

siege of the Residency at this site. The **National Botanical Gardens and Research Centre** are now located in its grounds. To the west, the **Shah Najaf Imambara** has the tomb of Ghazi-ud-din Haider (the sixth nawab).

❸ Chattr Manzil

NW of Qaiser Bagh. ☐ daily

Built during Saadat Ali Khan's reign (1798–1814), the Chattr Manzil ("Umbrella Palace"), derives its name from the umbrella-shaped gilt dome (*chattr*) crowning the structure. A *basement* (*tekhkhana*) was built below the level of the Gomti river, so that its waters could keep the area cool in the summer. The building now houses the Central Drug Research Institute.

❹ The Residency

NW of Qaiser Bagh. ☐ daily ☒ 12

Lucknow's most haunting monuments are the desolate ruins of the Residency. This complex of buildings which grew around the large brick home of the Resident, was an exclusive British enclave protected by fortifications. In 1857, all the city's British



The British Residency before it was destroyed during the siege of 1857

citizens took refuge here during the five-month siege. Sir Henry Lawrence, the commander of the troops, expected relief to arrive within 15 days. But it was 87 days before a force led by Sir Henry Havelock broke through the ranks of sepoys, only to find themselves trapped inside. For the next seven weeks they faced constant bombardment until Sir Colin Campbell finally retook the Residency on 17 November. By then almost 2,000 people had died either from bullet wounds or from cholera and typhoid.

Today the Residency looks just as it did in 1857. In its small museum, the gaping holes made by cannon fire are still visible. The **Model Room** on the ground floor has a model depicting British defences during the siege. Lying below are the cellars where the women and children took shelter. The cemetery near the ruined church has the forlorn graves of those who died, including that of Sir Henry Lawrence. An **Indian Martyrs' Memorial** stands opposite, on the banks of the Gomti river.

Bara Imambara

Hussainabad ☐ daily ● during Muharram (Mar/Apr)

Lucknow's most distinctive architectural structures are the *imambaras*, or ceremonial halls used during Muharram (see p669). The Bara ("Great") Imambara, built by Asaf-ud-Daula in 1784, was essentially a famine relief project providing much-needed employment. It is said that while one group of workers were involved with its construction during the day, another group dismantled it at night. Elaborate gates lead to this sprawling low edifice. Its most remarkable feature is a large hall, 50-m (164-ft) long and 15-m (49-ft) high, totally unsupported by pillars.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

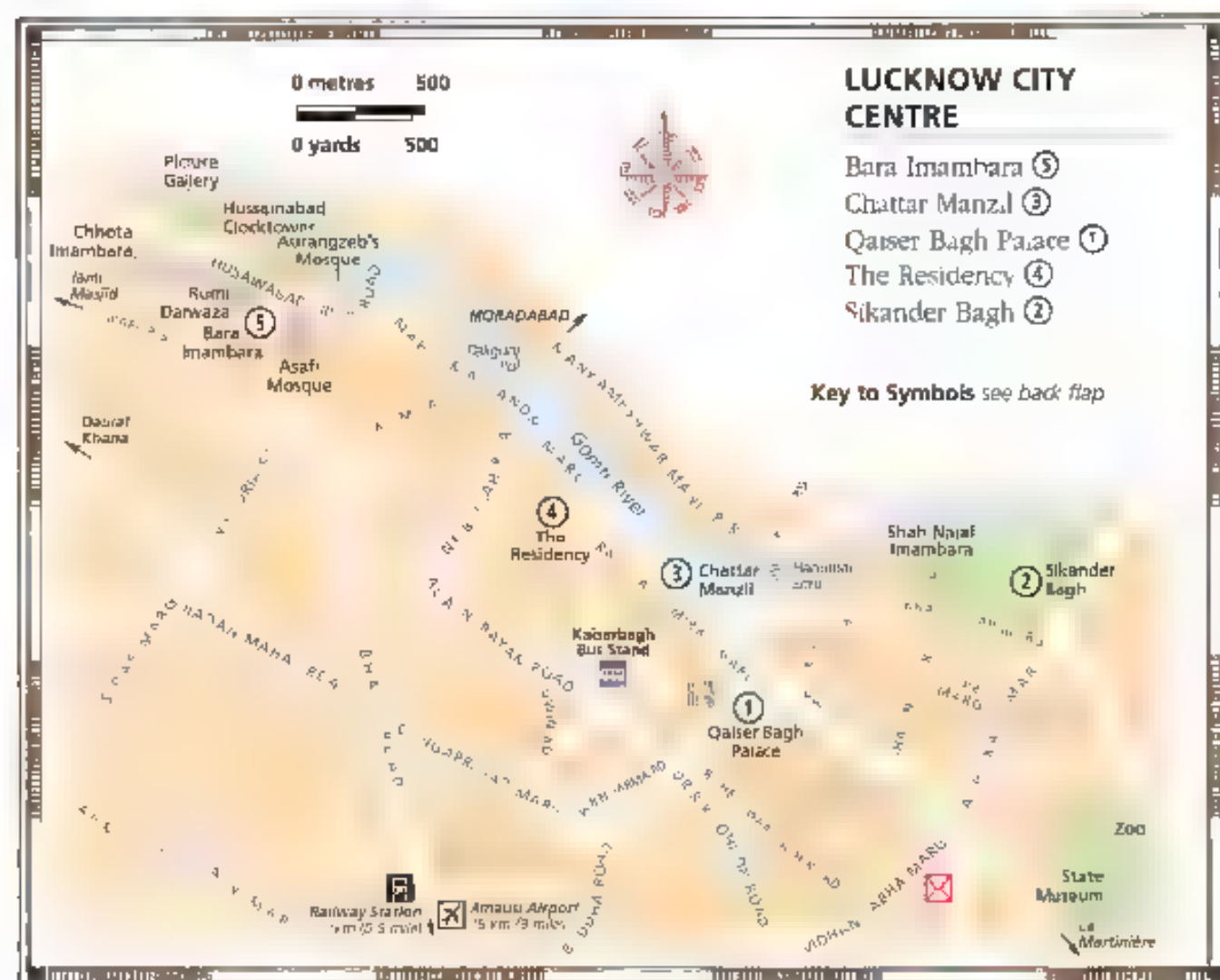
Lucknow district, 516 km (321 miles) E of Delhi. ☎ 1 917 000. ✈ Amaus, 15 km (9 miles) SW of Lucknow. 🚗 Regional Tourist Office, 10 Station Road. (0522) 263 8105. 📅 Muharram (Mar/Apr)

Above it is the *bbulbbuanyya*, a labyrinth of balconies and passages. The **Asafi Mosque** and a stepped *chahar* lie in the compound.

Asaf-ud-Daula also erected the 18-m (59-ft) high **Rumi Darwaza** just outside. This portal, embellished with lavish decorations, was the Imambara's west-facing entrance.



The Bara Imambara complex, built in the late 18th century



Lucknow: The Outer Sites

Some of Lucknow's best architectural sites lie beyond the city centre. The religious monuments, such as the *imambaras* and mosques, reveal a distinct Persian influence, while the secular buildings, which include the palaces of the nawabs as well as colonial structures, are more European in style. A particularly extravagant example among the latter is La Martinière. The home and mausoleum of a French adventurer, it later became a school, serving as the model for St Xavier's School, which was immortalized in Rudyard Kipling's novel, *Kim*.

Close to the Rumi Darwaza (see p197) **Aurangzeb's Mosque** stands on high ground known as Lakshman Tila, the location of Lucknow's original township. To the east is the **Hussainabad Clock-tower** erected in 1887. The 67-m (220-ft) high Gothic tower was built to mark the arrival of Sir George Cooper, Avadh's first lieutenant-governor. To its west lies the 19th-century Baradari, built by Mohammed Ali Shah (the eighth nawab), where the **Picture Gallery** is located. Splendid life-sized portraits of the ten nawabs, painted between 1882 and 1885 and recently renovated, are on display here.

To the west of the Picture Gallery is the Hussainabad Imambara, better known as the **Chhota Imambara**. This gem-like structure is surmounted by a delicate gold dome and its outside walls are engraved with superb calligraphy. The interiors are adorned with gilt-edged mirrors, ornate chandeliers, silver pulpits and colourful stucco decorations. The *tazias* (replica tombs) and *aiams* (standards, used during the Muharram festival, between March and April, are kept here). The **Jami Masjid**, to the southwest, is another striking structure, built by Mohammed Ali Shah in the early 19th century. Its walls are heavily ornamented and its arches are covered with fine stucco work.

Northwest of the Jami Masjid, the **Daulat Khana** was the palace of Asaf-ud-Daula. Constructed in the late 1780s

it includes numerous Indo-European buildings. The most prominent of these is the **Asafi Kothi**, its elegant façade marked by semi-circular bays.

Lucknow's main market is situated in the **Chowk**, the city's atmospheric old quarter stretching from Gori Darwaza to Asbani Darwaza. This maze of narrow *galis* (lanes) is lined with shops selling a range of goods from colourful

kites to *paan* to Lucknow's famed *chikankari* – fine muslin delicately embroidered with threadwork. Wholesale flower markets overflow with roses and jasmine and *attar* shops sell tiny bottles of fragrant perfume. The Chowk is also the best place to sample some authentic local cuisine (especially the many varieties of succulent kebabs), refined to an art form by chefs attached to nawabi households (see p162).

At the southeastern corner of the city, situated in the Zoological Gardens, is Lucknow's **State Museum**. Its collection includes rare silver and gold coins, 16th-century paintings, and stone sculpture from the 2nd century BC.

The extraordinary **La Martinière** stands further south. It was





Portrait of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in the Picture Gallery

built by Major General Claude Martin, a French soldier of fortune, and, in 1793, the richest European in Lucknow. A fanciful Gothic château, it has four enormous octagonal towers. The exterior is decorated with animals and mythological figures, including lions, gargoyles and a female sphinx. One of the two cannons on the terrace was cast by Martin, as was the bronze bell. He died in 1800 and is buried in the basement. In 1840 the building, in accordance with Martin's will, became a school for boys. The school was evacuated during the siege of Lucknow but re-opened a year later.

Picture Gallery

 Mon-Sat

State Museum

Tel (0522) 220 6158  Tue-Sun. 

La Martinière College

Prior permission required from the principal

Tel (0522) 222 3863



Alam, Chhota Imambara



The elaborate façade of La Martinière College for boys



The colourful Hanuman Garhi Temple in Ayodhya

Ayodhya 24

Faizabad district, 134 km (83 miles)
E of Lucknow Kartik Purnima
(Oct/Nov)

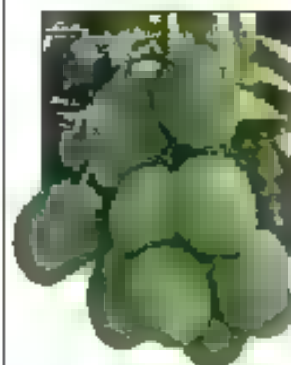
Located on the banks of the Sarayu river, Ayodhya is said to be the birthplace of Rama, the divine hero of the *Ramayana* (see p27). Dozens of temples in this small pilgrim town commemorate his birth. Whether this is a historical fact or simply part of oral tradition, for devout Hindus Ayodhya remains inextricably linked with the legend of Rama. As a result, when the Mughal emperor Babur built a mosque near the supposed spot of Rama's birthplace in 1526, he left behind a bitterly contested site. Known as the **Babri Masjid** ("Mosque of Babur"), it was a long-standing source of tension between Hindus and Muslims. In 1992, a mob of Hindus tore down the

mosque, leading to rioting all over the country. Security personnel now guard the site. A makeshift temple outside the security ring still attracts pilgrims, particularly during the full-moon night of Kartik Purnima. One of the more renowned temples among the hundreds of shrines on the river bank is the **Hanuman Garhi**. Built within the walls of an old fort, it is dedicated to the monkey god, Hanuman.

Environ

Ayodhya's twin city, lying 6 km (4 miles) to its west, **Faizabad** has a sizeable Muslim population and was Ayodhya's first capital, before it was shifted to Lucknow in 1775. In the town's centre is the Jamī Masjid, built by the later Mughals, while the 18th-century tomb of Zari Begum, the wife of Syed Asadullah (Ayodhya's third nawab), is an austere structure built in marble. Faizabad also has a pretty rose garden.

THE MANGO: KING OF FRUITS



Langra mangoes, available in summer

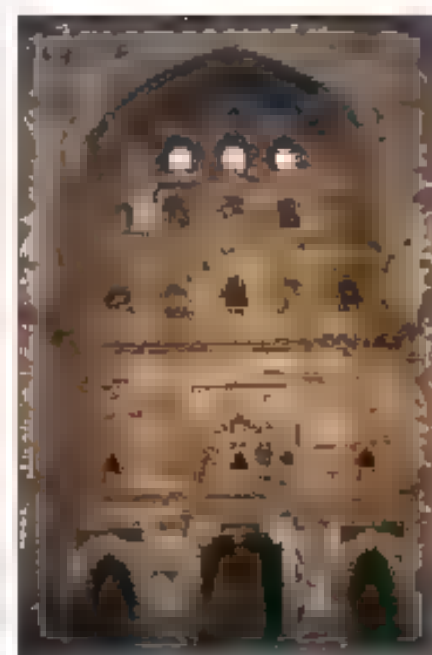
The mango (*amr*) is considered the king of tropical fruits and is the best loved fruit of the country. The Mughal emperor Babur called it the "finest fruit of Hindostan". The popular paisley motif is derived from the shape of the mango fruit, and mango leaves, considered auspicious, are used as bunting at festive occasions. Of the hundreds of varieties grown all over the subcontinent, few are as aromatic and juicy as the mangoes of Jaunpur. The *langra* is arguably the best among the varieties grown here. It is fleshy, juicy and sweet, and possessed of a distinct tangy flavour. It sells at a premium countrywide and is widely exported to the Middle East and Europe. The *dussehri* from Lucknow, and the *chausa* from the Rampur region, are also popular varieties. The raw *chausa* is considered ideal for spicy chutneys and pickles, without which no meal is complete.

Jaunpur 25

Jaunpur district, 60 km (37 miles)
SE of Lucknow 160,000

Though largely bypassed by visitors, Jaunpur has a wealth of medieval Islamic architecture. Located along the Gomti river, Jaunpur was established by Feroze Shah Tughlaq (see p91) in the late 14th century and soon grew into an important trading post. It was subsequently ruled by the independent Muslim rulers of the Sharqi dynasty who held sway for much of the 16th century until Ibrahim Lodi conquered the city in 1479. It eventually fell to the Mughals in the early part of the 16th century.

Jaunpur's many rulers each left a distinct architectural stamp on the city. The Mughal emperor Akbar built the great **Akbari Bridge** across the river, which still stands. To its north is the **Old Shahi Fort** from the Tughlaq era. It contains a mosque built with yellow and blue enameled bricks, and an exact replica of a traditional Turkish bath or *hamam*. The most striking mosque, the **Atala Masjid**, just outside the fort, dates to the Sharqi period. It is embellished with recessed arches and ornamental fringes, and square courts surrounding the central structure. Though built on a grander scale, the 15th-century **Jami Masjid** borrows its basic architectural inspiration from the Atala Masjid.



The grand façade of the Jami Masjid in Jaunpur





Varanasi 26

Also known as Kashi ("the City of Light"), or as Benares, Varanasi is situated on the west bank of the Ganges and is India's holiest Hindu city, with a spiritual and religious legacy that goes back nearly 3,000 years. This is the city of Shiva, the foremost among the 12 places where the god burrowed and then burst into the sky in a fiery pillar of light (*pyotirlinga*). Sanctified by Shiva's all-pervading presence and the sacred Ganges, the 90 or so ghats along the river define the life and identity of Varanasi. Stretching from the southern Asi Ghat to the northern Adi Keshava Ghat, close to the Malviya Bridge, the ghats cover more than 6 km (4 miles). Lined with temples and shrines they reverberate with the endless cycle of Hindu religious practice – from daily rituals to profound rites of passage.



LOCATOR MAP

Asi Ghat to Shrivatsa Ghat



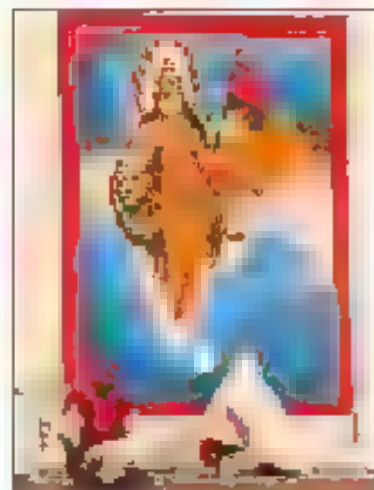
Tulsi Ghat

One of Varanasi's oldest sites, this ghat (earlier known as Lolarka Ghat) was renamed after the poet-saint Tulsidas who lived here in the 16th century. His house and temple still stand nearby.



Asi Ghat

A linga stands beneath a pipal tree on Varanasi's southernmost ghat, which marks the confluence of the Asi and Ganges rivers.



Mural of goddess on the walls at Ganga Mahal Ghat

Rewa Ghat

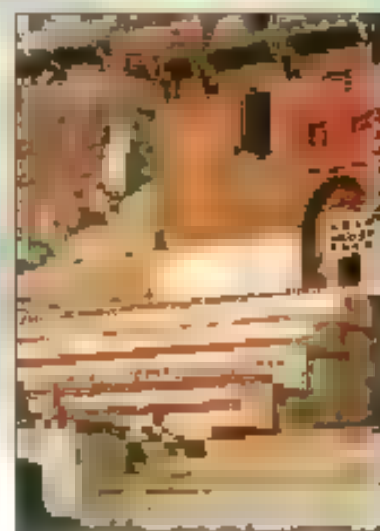
0 metres 50
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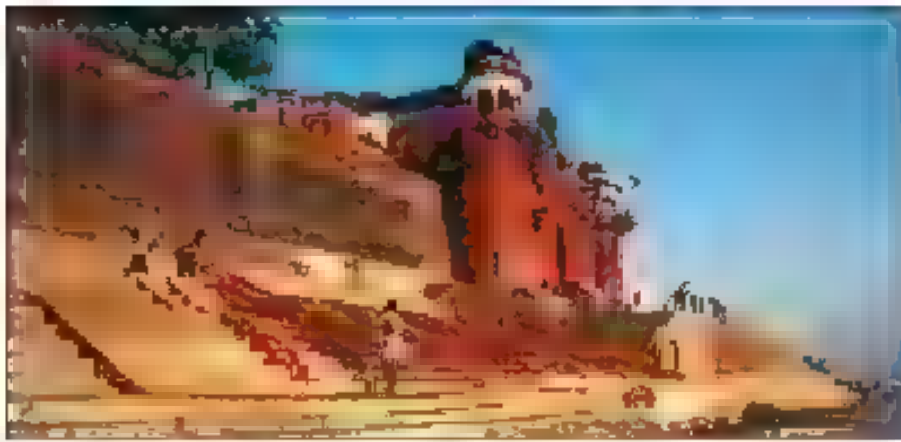
Bhadaini Ghat

Ganga Maha Ghat

Janki Ghat

Brick red steps distinguish Janki Ghat in keeping with the Varanasi tradition of each ghat having its own distinctive colour.





Chet Singh Ghat

The fort on this ghat marks the spot where Maharaja Chet Singh was defeated by the British in the mid 18th century.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Varanasi district 286 km (178 miles) SE of Lucknow. 2,000,000 22 km (14 miles) NW of the city Parade Kothi, (0542) 220 8162, Varanasi Junction Station, (0542) 234 6370 daily Shivratri (Feb/Mar), Ramlila (Sep/Oct), Ganga Festival (Oct/Nov).

Anandamayi Ghat

The ashram founded by the Bengali female saint Anandamayi Ma. draws thousands of devotees.

Niranjani Ghat

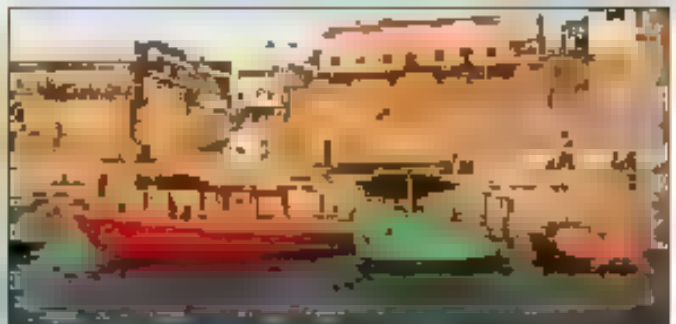
Panchkot Ghat

Maharvani Ghat

Jain Ghat

Prabhu Ghat

Vatsara Ghat



Shivala Ghat

This ghat, dating to 1770, was built by Chet Singh the maharaja of Varanasi.



Boat Building

Planks lie waiting to be jointed into boats which are an essential mode of transportation along the busy river front.

RAMLILA

The Ramlila is a cycle of plays which tells the story of the *Ramayana* (see p27), in which Lord Rama is exiled from his kingdom for 14 years. The Ramlila tradition was started in Varanasi by Tulsidas, author of the *Ramcharitmanas* (a popular version of the epic). Street performances take place in the evenings at different venues. In September/October, attracting thousands of spectators. The performance at the residence of the former maharaja at Ramnagar Fort is by far the most spectacular of the Ramlilas in Varanasi.



Young boys dressed as the main characters

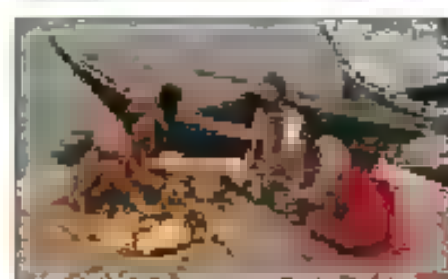
Varanasi: Digpatiya Ghat to Mir Ghat

These centrally located ghats are the city's most sacred, and many of them were built under the patronage of India's erstwhile princely states, such as Darbhanga, Jaipur and Indore. One of Varanasi's two cremation ghats, Harishchandra Ghat, lies just to the south. Behind the holy Dasashvamedha Ghat meanders a winding lane known as Vishwanath Gali, lined with a multitude of shops that sell all manner of religious objects. It leads to the city's principal shrine, the Vishwanath Temple, said to be over 1,000 years old.



LOCATOR MAP

Digpatiya Ghat to Mir Ghat



Digpatiya Ghat

Chausatthi Ghat

Lessons in the scriptures take place at this ghat, named after the temple of the Chausath Yoginis or 64 female divinities

Harishchandra Ghat

Rana Mahal Ghat

Munsi Ghat

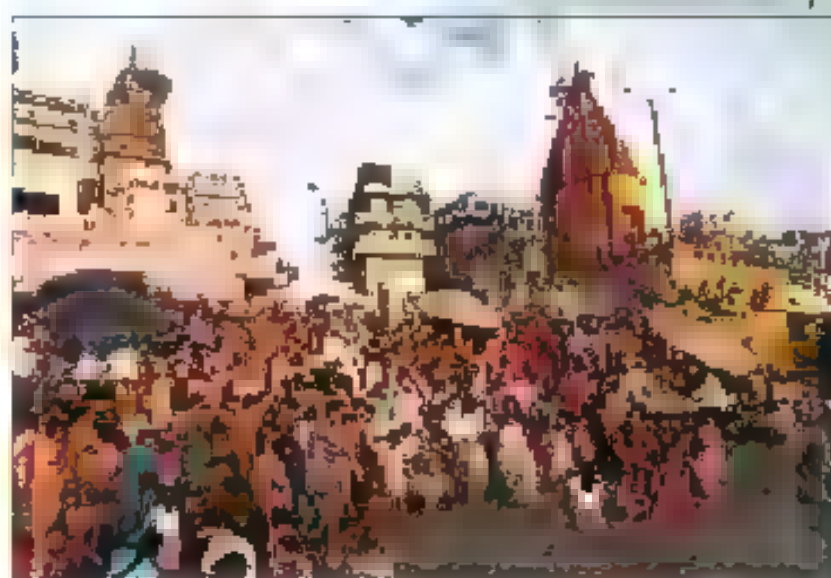
Ahilyabai Ghat

Prayag Ghat



Darbhanga Ghat

The towers and turrets of old havelis, built in the early 1900s by two princes of Bihar, dominate this ghat. Some of the massive pillars in these havelis are reminiscent of the Greek style.



Dasashvamedha Ghat

This centrally located ghat, Varanasi's hottest spot, is named after the ten simultaneous horse sacrifices (dasashvamedha) performed by Brahma the Creator. Rows of priests sit under bamboo parasols, ready to perform ritual prayers for the pilgrims that swarm here.

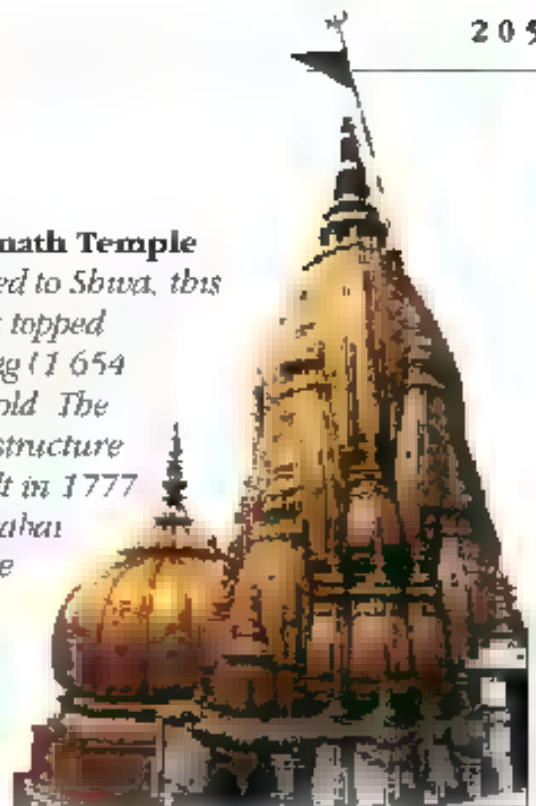


Vishwanath Gali

Lacquer jars, vermillion powder, bottled Ganges water, bangles and brocade, are all sold in the lane that leads to the Vishwanath Temple, the focal point of all worship in Varanasi.

Vishwanath Temple

Dedicated to Shiva, this shrine is topped by 750 kg (1 654 lbs) of gold. The present structure was built in 1777 by Ahiryaiah of Indore.



Vishwanath Temple



Man Mandir Ghat

Jai Singh II of Jaipur built one of his four Jantar Mantars (see pp358-9) above Raja Man Singh's palace in 1710. Its sundial is visible from the ghat.

The Palace of the Dom Raja the king of the Doms. The Doms are a caste who have exclusive rights over the cremation ghats. They sell wood and collect the ashes. The Dom Raja's wealth derives from the cremation fees his family have collected for centuries.

Tripura Bhairavi Ghat

Mir Ghat

0 metres 50
0 yards 50

BOAT RIDES

A sunrise boat ride is the highlight of a trip to Varanasi, when the temples along the river front are bathed in soft light. The people of Varanasi trickle out of the labyrinthine lanes and head for the ghats at dawn. Here they wash clothes, perform yoga *asanas*, offer flowers and incense to the river, and take a ritual d.p. The most fascinating ride is from Dasashvamedha to Manikarnika Ghat (see p206). Dozens of rowing boats ply up and down the river, and can be hired by the hour. Rates are negotiable, so do fix the price before hiring one.



Dasashvamedha Ghat at sunrise

Varanasi: Nepali Ghat to Panchaganga Ghat

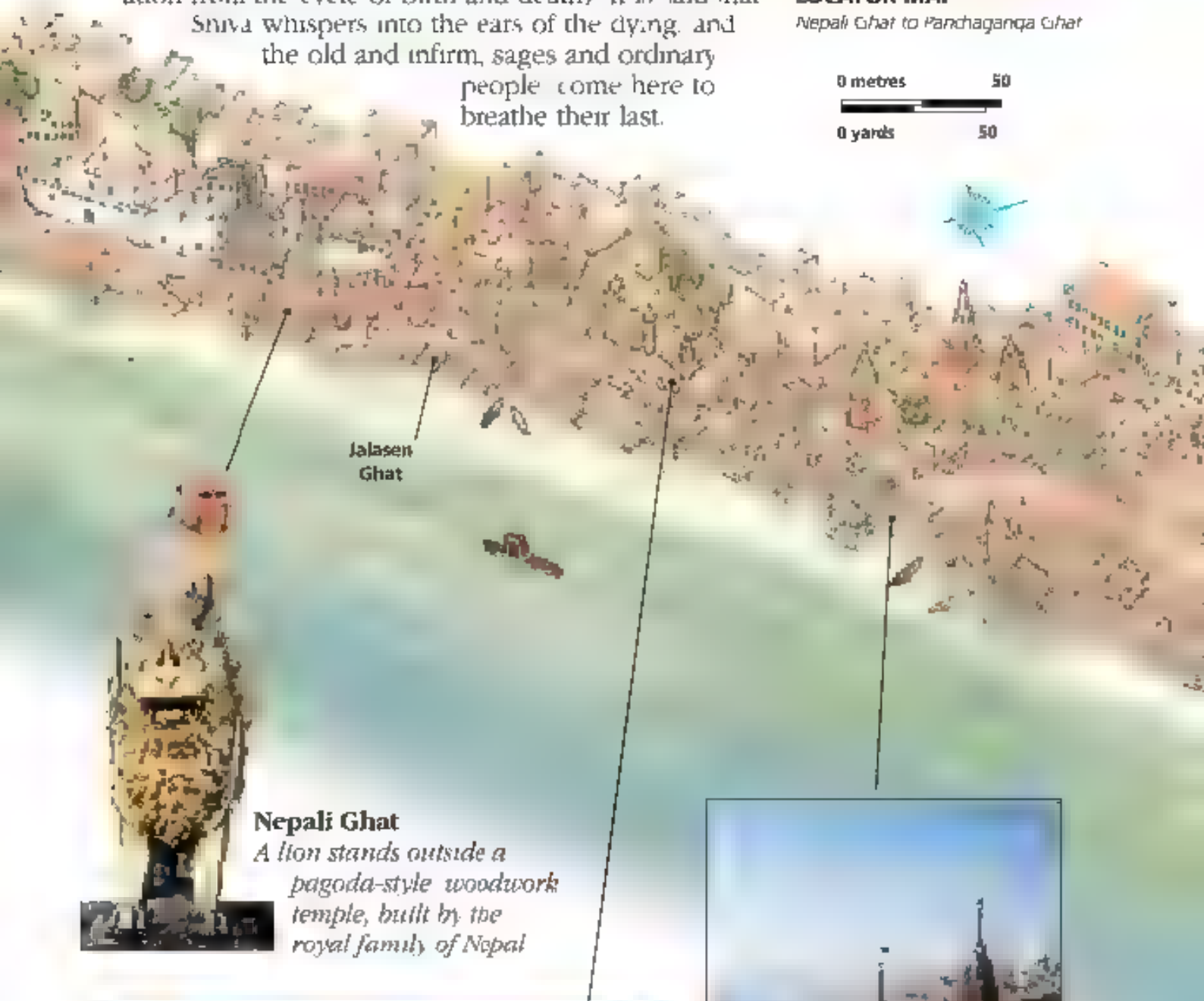
Along this stretch is the famed Manikarnika Ghat, one of the city's two cremation ghats. According to legend, Shiva's *mani* (crest jewel) and his consort Parvati's *karnika* (earring), fell into the nearby well while they were bathing, hence the name. Dying in Varanasi is a cause of celebration for Hindus, as it is believed to bestow instant salvation or *moksha* (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). It is said that Shiva whispers into the ears of the dying, and the old and infirm, sages and ordinary people come here to breathe their last.



LOCATOR MAP

Nepali Ghat to Panchaganga Ghat

0 metres 50
0 yards 50



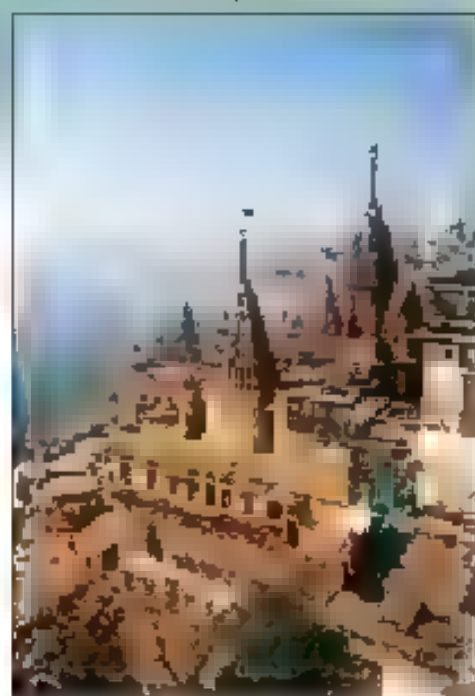
Nepali Ghat

A lion stands outside a pagoda-style woodwork temple, built by the royal family of Nepal



Manikarnika Ghat

Funeral pyres burn day and night at this cremation ghat: white bodies wrapped in shrouds lie on biers besides piles of wooden logs. In the middle of the ghat is the well (kand) that Vishnu carved out with his discus before the Ganges flowed here.



Scindia Ghat

The elaborate structures on this ghat were so top heavy that they collapsed, and were rebuilt by Daulat Rao Scindia of Gwalior in 1937. A temple stands half submerged in the river with its sanctum knee deep in the water.

RITUALS PERFORMED IN THE GANGES



A vessel for holy water

Although there are over 700 temples in Varanasi, none are more sacred than the river itself. The Ganges is worshipped as a living goddess, with the power to cleanse all earthly sins. Daily baths in her waters are advised by Hindu scriptures to prepare for the soul's final journey to liberation. Offerings of flowers and diyas floating down the river are a common and very pretty sight.



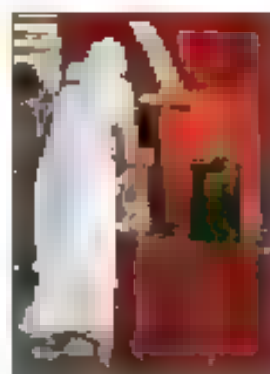
A Ritual Dip

Thousands come to Varanasi everyday, to bathe and pay obeisance to the Ganges.



Evening Aarti

The daily prayers (aarti) at dawn and dusk, serve as salutations to the river. Oil lamps are offered and bells rung while sacred mantras are chanted.



Wayside Shrine

A widow clad in white assembles flowers, incense and Ganges water in a small brass container for paying homage at a wayside shrine.

Ganga Mahal Ghat was also built by the king of Gwalior in the early 19th century.

Bhonsle Ghat

Akharas

The city's akharas or wrestling arenas are famous. Men live and train at these centres full time, as part of their tutelage under a guru.



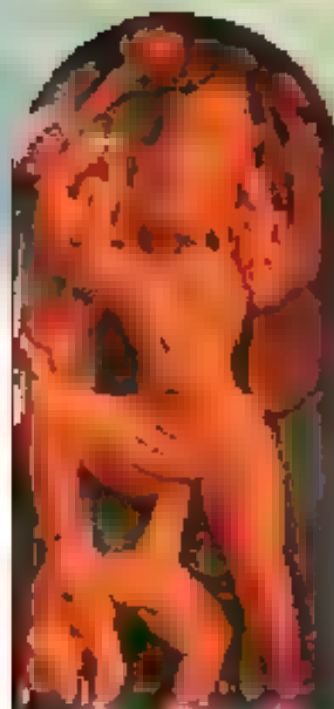
Aurangzeb's mosque

Built on the site of a Hindu temple that was destroyed, is a grand structure that dominates the skyline.

Sankatha Ghat

Mehta Ghat

Jatar Ghat



Hanuman, the Monkey God, at Ganga Mahal Ghat



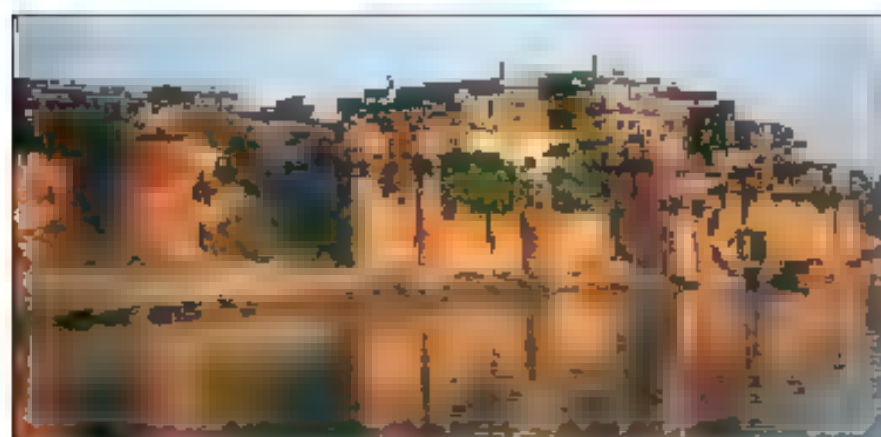
Panchaganga Ghat

This ghat marks the mythical meeting place of five sacred rivers, and has numerous images of the five river goddesses – Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Dhupapapa and Kirana.

Adi Keshava Ghat

Exploring Varanasi

Varanasi, one of the oldest cities in the world and a contemporary of Babylon and Nineveh, dates to the 7th century BC. This eternal city, where religion is an integral part of daily life, has drawn saints, poets and pilgrims through the ages. Behind the riverside ghats are narrow, crowded lanes and bazaars, where people jostle with sacred cows, saffron-robed sadhus and devotees making offerings at roadside shrines. Varanasi is also renowned as a centre of Sanskrit learning and Hindu philosophy, attracting scholars and students from all over India. The Benares Hindu University, established in the early 1900s, perpetuates this tradition.



Dramatic ramparts of the Ramnagar Fort rising from the river bank

The narrow, winding Vishwanath Gali leads to the **Vishwanath Temple**, dedicated to Shiva, who is known here as Vishwanath, "Lord of the Universe". Painted flora, carvings adorn its exterior and interior walls, and it is nearly always crowded. Adjacent to it lies the ancient **Jnana Vapi Well** ("Well of Wisdom"), whose waters are said to bring enlightenment. According to legend, this well is believed to contain the linga from the original Vishwanath Temple, which was destroyed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in the 17th century. The **Jnana Vapi Mosque** is built on the ruins of the temple.

Further south lies the sprawling **Benares Hindu University**, founded by the eminent Sanskrit scholar, Madan Mohan Malviya. Within the campus is the renowned **Bharat Kala Bhavan Museum**, known for having one of the country's best collections of Indian paintings. About 12,000 in number, they cover the period from the 11th century to the 20th century. Most impressive are the

Mughal miniatures, notably a depiction of the Emperor Shah Jahan. The Indian sculpture section is equally impressive, housing around 2,000 pieces, from 300 BC to AD 1400. Among them are a fine 10th-century sculpture of the marriage of Shiva and Parvati and an 11th-century statue of Vishnu as Varaha (see p679). The display of Gandhara sculpture is also noteworthy.

The 17th-century **Ramnagar Fort**, lying across the river beyond Asi Ghat, has been home to the maharajas of Varanasi for 400 years. Although now in a state of disrepair, the palace still retains its charm. Ornamented swords, photographs of tiger shoots and visits by the King and Queen of Belgium line the walls. The Durbar Hall now houses the museum, where numerous objects are on display, including palanquins and elephant howdahs.

Bharat Kala Bhavan
Tel 0542, 230 7621 ☐ Mon-Sat

Ramnagar Fort and Museum
☐ daily

Sarnath 27

Varanasi district, 10 km (6 miles) NE of Varanasi. Buddha Mahotsava (May)

To Buddhists, Sarnath is as sacred as Varanasi is to Hindus. The Buddha came to the Deer Park here in 528 BC to preach the Dharmachakra, or the Wheel of Law, his first major sermon after gaining enlightenment (see p221). Sarnath was then one of ancient India's greatest centres of learning, visited by Chinese travellers Fa-Hsien and Hsien Tsang who wrote of its flourishing monasteries.

The central monument of the existing complex is the 5th-century AD **Dhamekh Stupa**, which is built at the site where the Buddha is believed to have delivered his sermon to five disciples. To its west, are the remains of the Dharmarajika Stupa, built by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (see p42) to preserve the Buddha's relics. The complex also has several smaller monasteries and temples, as well as a Bodhi Tree, planted in 1931, and the statue of Anagarika Dharmapala, the founder of the society that maintained Sarnath and Bodhi Gaya (see pp222-3).

The **Archaeological Museum** exhibits a superb collection of Buddhist artifacts. The highlight is the Ashokan Lion capital in polished sandstone (see p4), India's national emblem.

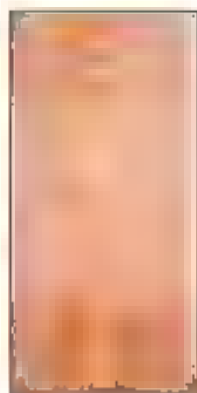
Archaeological Museum
Tel 0542, 258 5002 ☐ Sat-Thu



Dhamekh Stupa, Sarnath's principal monument

Brocades from Varanasi

Varanasi, India's most ancient pilgrimage centre, is also famous for its textiles. Renowned for its gossamer-fine cotton weaves for over 2000 years, its weaving traditions acquired new splendour from the 16th century onwards, with the patronage of the Mughal emperors. Varanasi's weavers soon became adept at weaving silk with gold and silver thread, to create sumptuous



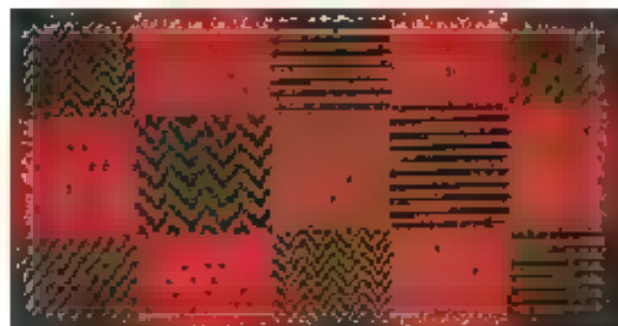
Paisley pattern on silk

brocades for royal costumes and court furnishings, embellished with the exquisite floral, animal and geometric motifs favoured by the Mughals. They also produced brocades for Tibetan monasteries decorated with Buddhist motifs such as clouds, lotus flowers and flames. Today a wide range of brocade saris, scarves, and Tibetan-style fabrics are made and sold in the city.

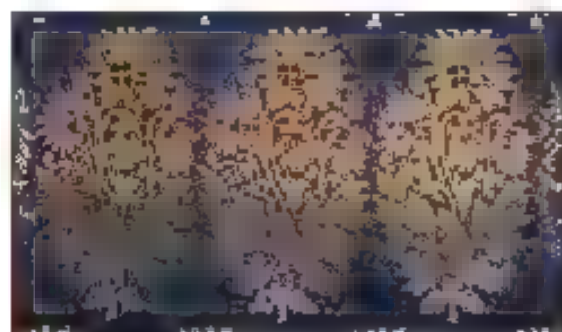


The pallav, the culminating embellishment of a sari (see p30), is the most elaborately designed part of the sari. Its rich and complex weave requires very fine and deft craftsmanship.

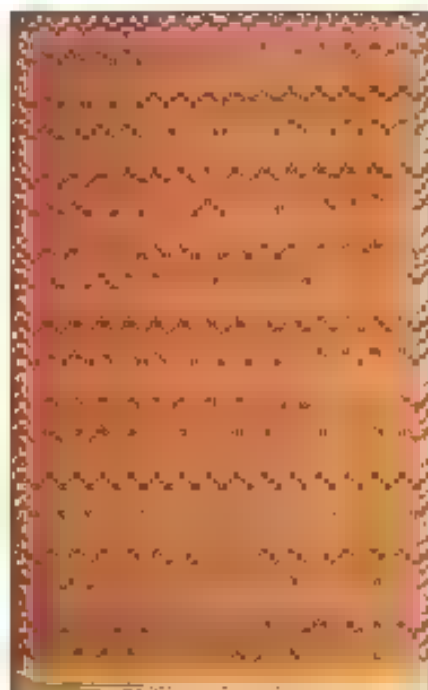
Gyaser textiles were traditionally woven for trade with Tibet. This contemporary textile has taken a single element (the flame) from a ritual cloth to create a stunning pattern.



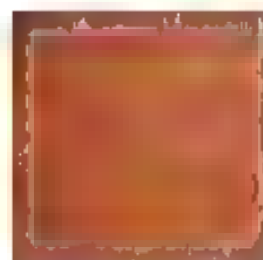
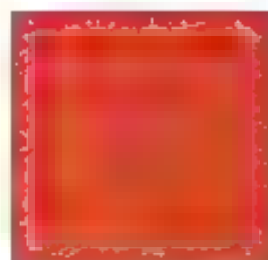
A panel of more than 600 geometric motifs has been specially created as a design directory for Varanasi's brocade weavers.



The flower motif the classic laufa buta combines gold and silver threads in a style known as Ganga-Yamuna, after the two rivers whose waters are pale and dark.



The Panch Ranga sari in the five-colour sari creates a lehariya (wave) design in alternating colours of blue, orange, purple, pink and green, with a patterned edging in gold. The sheer richness of the design and colours are its distinguishing features.



Contemporary brocades recreate fish scale patterns in gold and silver threads, inspired by Gyaser textiles, as well as jali or trellis designs used in Mughal architecture.



The creeper-covered ramparts of Allahabad Fort, built by the Mughal emperor Akbar

Allahabad 28

Allahabad district: 227 km (141 miles)
SE of Lucknow 990,300

T Tourist Bungalows, 35 MG Marg,
Civil Lines, (0532) 260 1837
Kumbh Mela (every 12 years)

Allahabad's sacred location at the confluence (*sangam*) of three rivers – the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati – has given it a cultural, political and religious importance for nearly 3,000 years. Hsien Tsang, the Buddhist monk and scholar (see p219), visited the town (then known as Prayag) in AD 643, and wrote in great detail of its prosperity and fame.

In the 16th century it was captured by the Mughals who renamed it *Alahabad*. Later the British maintained a large military presence in the city and established the law courts and the university *Jawahar*. Nehru (see p57). India's first prime minister, was born here in 1889, and the city later became a major centre of the Independence Movement. Today Allahabad is a

quietly prosperous provincial centre: the broad tree-lined avenues of the Civil Lines area contrasting with the congested bustle of the old city.

Allahabad Fort was built in 1583 by Akbar, who had a 5th-century BC Ashokan pillar brought here from Kausambi. The pillar, unfortunately, is in a part of the fort that is not open to the public. On the fort's eastern side is a temple complex with an undying banyan tree; the **Akshavata** Legend has it that anyone who leapt from its branches would achieve

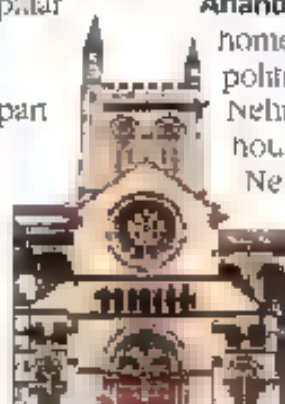
salvation from the endless cycle of rebirths. After too many such attempts, the tree was fenced off and a special permit is required from the local tourist office to view it.

Khusrau Bagh, a tranquil Mughal garden on the western edge of town, is named after Emperor Jahangir's eldest son who led an unsuccessful rebellion against his father and was later murdered during the battle over succession with his brother, Shah Jahan in 1657. His tomb lies next to those

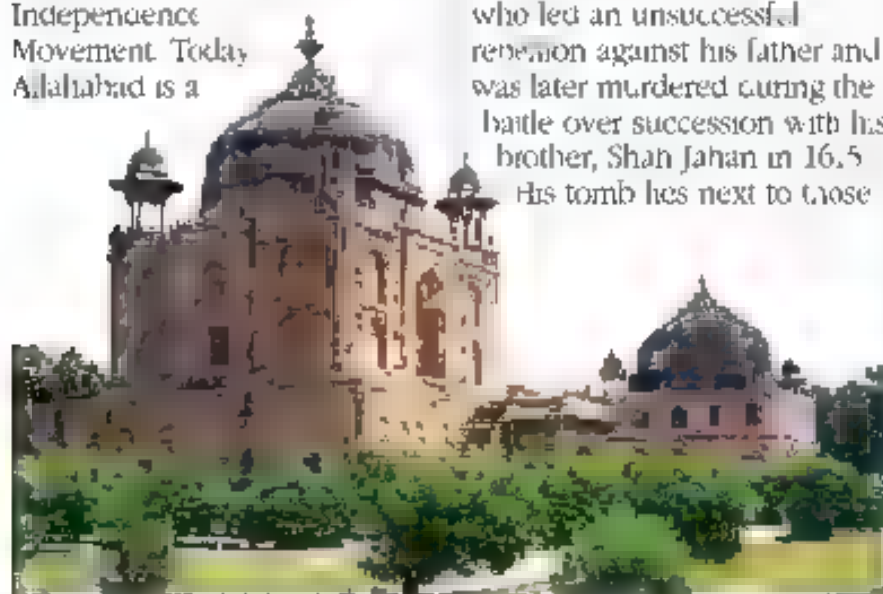
of his sister and his mother. The latter, a Rajput princess from Jaipur, distraught by the war between her husband and her son, took an overdose of opium. The *chhatri*s on her tomb show Rajput influence.

Anand Bhavan, ancestral home of India's premier political dynasty – the Nehru-Gandhi family, now houses a museum of Nehru memorabilia and chronicles the high points of the Independence Movement. Close by, in the Civil Lines area, is the fantastically arched and turreted **Muir College** built in

1870, and regarded a fine example of Indo-Saracenic architecture. Some glazed blue and white tiles still cling to the dome and a single tower soars to a height of 60 m (197 ft). Across the road is the **Allahabad Museum** which has an interesting collection of terracottas from Kausambi, and some 11th- to 13th-century sculpture from the Chandela era. Across Civil Lines to the west stands the **All Saints Cathedral**. Constructed in 1877 and designed by William Frimerson, architect of the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata (see pp274–5), it is lined with Jaipur marble inside.



Gothic façade of the All Saints Cathedral



The tombs of Prince Khusrau and his sister, Khusrau Bagh

Allahabad Fort
● closed to the public

Anand Bhavan
☐ Tue–Sun.

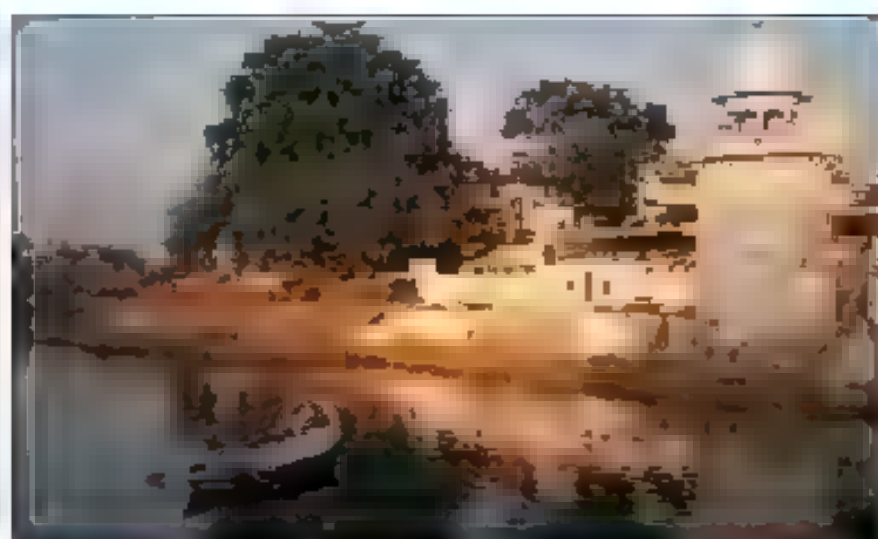
Allahabad Museum
☐ Tue–Sun.

Environs

Kausambi is 63 km (39 miles) and about an hour's drive from Allahabad on the eastern bank of the Yamuna. Excavated ruins of a stupa, a palace and extensive ramparts lie within a 2-km (1.3-mile) radius. While local legend holds that the city was built by the Pandavas, heroes of the *Mahabharata* (see p26), excavations reveal that a Buddhist community flourished here between 600 BC and AD 600. The Buddha himself came here to preach. The site contains the remains of a paved brick road, small houses, each with a ceramic drain, and the stump of an Ashokan pillar dating to the 3rd century BC (a second pillar was moved to the Allahabad Fort). Some terracotta artifacts and seals from 200 BC, which were found here, are now in the Allahabad Museum. Surrounded by fields and villages, with the river in the background, Kausambi has an aura of great serenity.



The remains of mud and brick ramparts at Kausambi



Chitrakoot's Ramghat, with temples on the banks of the Mandakini river

Chitrakoot 29

Banda district 128 km (80 miles) SW of Allahabad Karwi, 8 km (5 miles), NE of town centre, then taxi or bus. JPSTDC Tourism Bungalows, (05198) 224 219 daily

This pilgrim town on the banks of the Mandakini river though in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh, is easier to access from Allahabad. Chitrakoot, literally 'the Hill of Many Wonders' refers to the forested **Kamadgiri Hill**, where according to the *Ramayana*, Rama, Sita and Lakshman spent a portion of their 14-year exile. Below the millies **Hanuman Dhara**, a natural spring that flows over a delightful image of the monkey god, Hanuman, placed in a recess. Dotted with numerous temples, and full of sadhus, the town has a unique charm. Boat rides from the attractive **Ramghat**, the town's main ghat, provide an impressive view of the temples along the river bank.

Kalinjar Fort 30

Banda district 190 km (118 miles) W of Allahabad Banda, 5.3 km (3.3 miles) N of Kalinjar Fort, then taxi or bus. daily

One of India's oldest forts, Kalinjar was called Kanagora by Ptolemy, the 2nd-century AD Greek geographer. Its strategic location on the route between North and South India made it a coveted target for many rulers. It has thus had a very turbulent history and was successively occupied by many medieval rulers, until it fell to the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Sur (see p79) in 1545.

Seven gateways, named after seven planets, and lined with sculptures and carvings lead to the fort. These include a giant Shiva with 18 arms and a dancing Ganesha. The **Neelkanth Temple** inside the fort, is dedicated to Shiva. Still in worship, the temple's inner sanctum contains an ancient linga.

THE KUMBH MELA

Hindu legend has it that during a war over the urn (*kumbh*) of immortal nectar (*amrit*) between the gods and demons, Vishnu gave the urn to Garuda, his winged mount. During his flight, four drops of the nectar fell on four places, Nasik (see p474), Ujjain (see p246), Haridwar (see p184) and Allahabad. A Kumbh Mela is thus held at each spot in turn.

every three years, when certain planetary configurations transform the waters of the Ganges into nectar. Pilgrims from all over India converge at the Kumbh Mela to wash away their sins, making it the world's largest religious gathering. Spectacularly built tent-cities and stalls spring up to cater to the influx. At Allahabad's Kumbh Mela (Jan–Feb 2001), almost 30 million devotees took a bath on Mauni Amavasya (24 Jan), the most sacred of the six main bathing days. The next Kumbh Melas will be held in Haridwar in 2010 and in Allahabad in 2013.



Pilgrims at Allahabad's Kumbh Mela in 2001



BIHAR & JHARKHAND

The name Bihar derives from the Sanskrit word *vihara*, or monastery – an apt appellation for a state which was the birthplace of Buddhism. Major sites associated with the life and teachings of the Buddha, such as Bodhi Gaya, Nalanda and Rajgir are in the dry plains of central Bihar and are the main attractions for visitors to the state. Northern Bihar is a fertile agricultural plain watered by the River Ganges and its tributaries where

the famous Patna rice is grown. In November 2000 the southern part of Bihar became the new state of Jharkhand, which is dominated by a scenic and thickly forested highland called the Chhota Nagpur Plateau. The game sanctuaries of Palamau and Hazaribagh are located here. Jharkhand is rich in mineral resources, and is also the home of several indigenous tribes, believed to be among the earliest settlers of the Indian subcontinent.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

Jamshedpur 18
Munger 5
Patna 1
Ranchi 15

Hill Stations

Netarhat 12

Historic Sites

Nalanda 7
Rajgir 6
Sasaram 2
Vaishali 4

Temple Towns & Holy Places

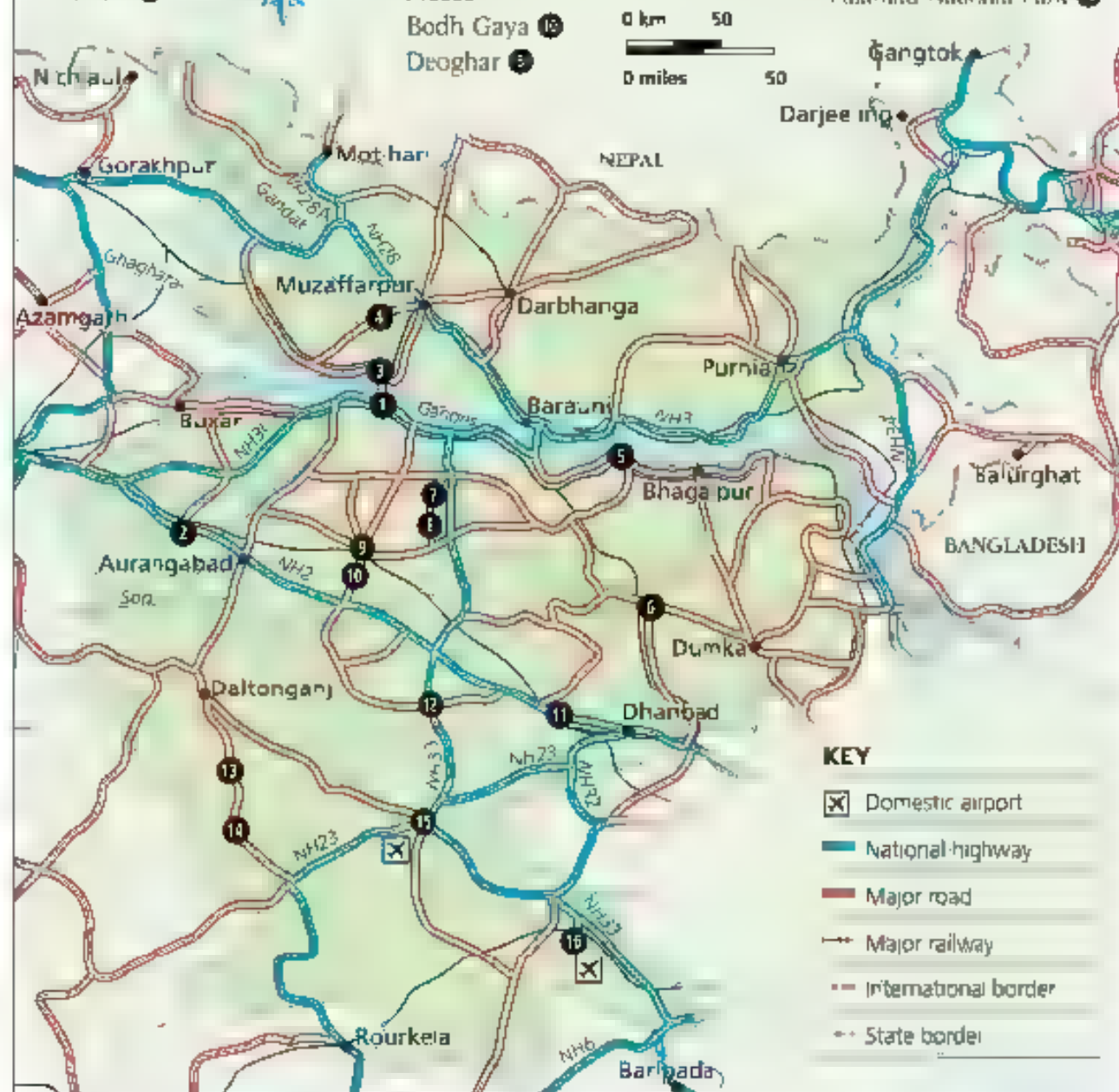
Bodhi Gaya 16
Deoghar 3

Gaya 9

Parasnath 11
Sonepur 8

National Parks

Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary 13
Palamau National Park 17



Patna ❶



Didarganj
Yakshi

The capital of Bihar is a modern city with ancient roots going back to 600 BC. During the reign of the Maurya and Gupta empires (see p42) Patna, then known as Pataliputra, was renowned as one of the great cities of Asia, but today it is a congested urban sprawl stretching along the banks of the Ganges. West Patna, laid out by the British, has gracious mansions and administrative buildings, while the eastern end comprises the old city: a warren of crowded lanes surrounding medieval monuments and bustling bazaars.



A view of Patna, lying on the south bank of the Ganges

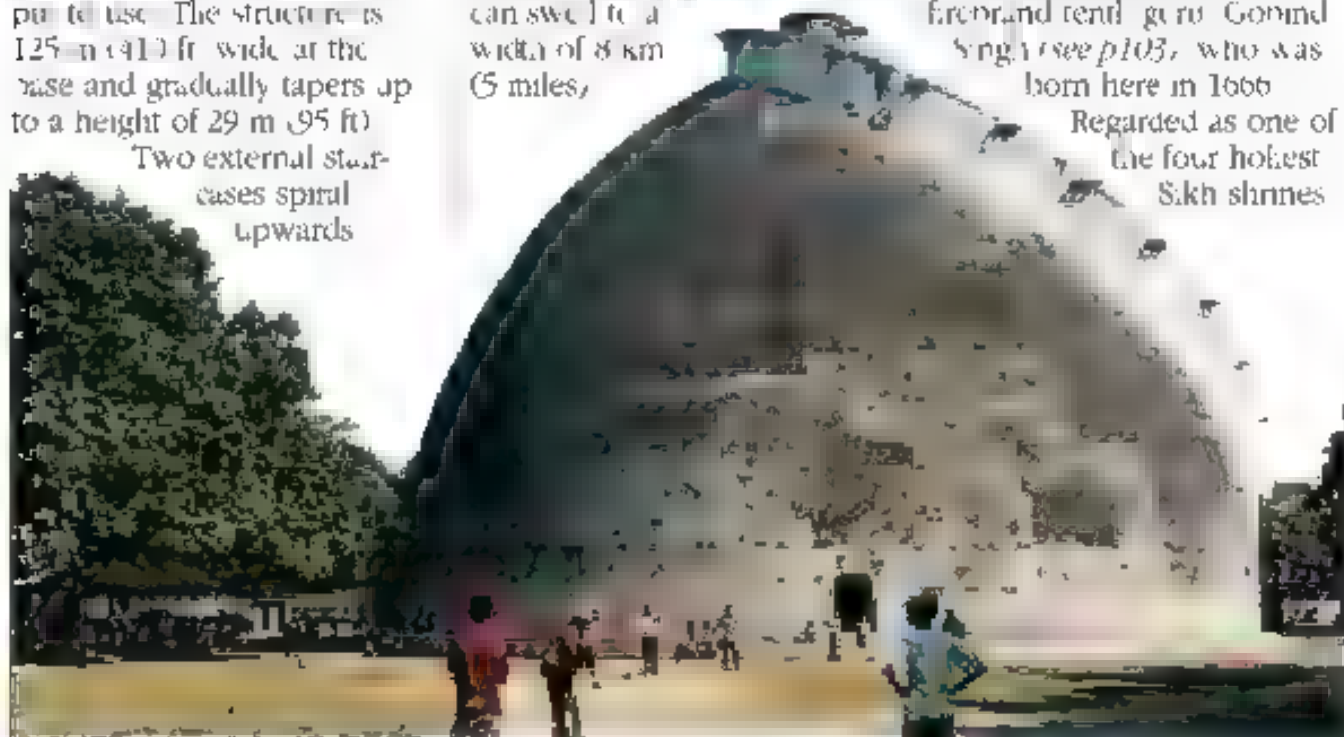
❶ Golghar

☐ daily

Patna's signature landmark, the Golghar (literally 'round house'), is an extraordinary dome that resembles a giant beehive. Built in 1786 by Captain John Garstin as a silo to store grain during the famines that occurred frequently in those days, the Golghar was never actually put to use. The structure is 125 m (410 ft) wide at the base and gradually tapers up to a height of 29 m (95 ft).

Two external staircases spiral upwards

along its sides, with platforms to rest on along the way. The idea was to haul the grain up, and pour it down a hole at the top into the dome's pit, which had a capacity of 21,285 tonnes. A remarkable echo can be heard inside the structure. During the monsoon, the dome's summit offers impressive views of the Ganges which, in this season, can swell to a width of 8 km (5 miles),



The beehive-shaped Golghar, built as a granary in the 18th century

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p697 and p726

❷ State Museum

Tel (0612) 223 5731 ☐ Tue–Sun

Some remarkable treasures are displayed in the State Museum. Among them is the Mauryan-era (probably 3rd century BC) polished stone image of the Didarganj Yakshi (female attendant), considered a masterpiece of Indian sculpture. Other highlights include Gandharan style statues of Bodhisattvas; outstanding Buddha images in bronze and black stone, dating from the Pala period (8th–12th centuries); terracotta figurines; ancient Buddhist scriptures; and a collection of Tibetan *thangkas*. The museum also boasts a 15-m (49-ft) long fossilized tree trunk, believed to be 200 million years old.

❸ Khudabaksh Library

Tel (0612) 267 0209

www.khlibrary.bih.nic.in ☐ Sat–Thu

Founded in 1900, this library has a renowned collection of rare Persian and Arabic manuscripts, including a group of beautiful illuminated medieval Korans, and superb Mughal miniature paintings. Its rarest exhibits are volumes salvaged from the sacking of the Moorish University in Cordoba, Spain, in the 13th century, though how they found their way to India still remains a mystery.

❹ Harmandir Sahib

☐ daily

This historic Sikh gurdwara marks the birthplace of the firebrand tenth guru, Gobind Singh (see p103), who was born here in 1666.

Regarded as one of the four holiest Sikh shrines



The eclectic private collection at the Jalan Museum

the marble temple was built in the 19th century by Maharaja Ranjit Singh (see p104). On the floor above the main sanctum is a museum with the guru's relics.

III Jalan Museum

By appointment **Tel** (0612) 264 1121. Also known as Qila ("Fort") House, this museum's eclectic collection, gathered by a 19th-century ancestor of the Jalan family, includes Chinese paintings, Mughal jade and silverware, Napoleon's bed, and Marie Antoinette's Sevres porcelain. Qila House itself is an interesting structure, built

on the ruins of a 16th-century fort constructed by the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Sur (see p79).

III Kumrahar

□ Tue–Sun

This site contains the ruins of the ancient city of Pataliputra. Excavations have unearthed elaborately carved wooden ramparts, polished sandstone pillars and the remains of a vast Mauryan assembly hall that is said to have stood here in the 2nd century BC. A museum here displays some of these finds, which date from an era when Patna was described by Megasthenes, the

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Patna district 1,015 km (631 miles) E of Delhi. 1,377,000. 7 km (4 miles) W of the city centre. Bihar Tourism, JP Loknayak Bhavan, Fraser Rd, (0612) 222 5411. Mon–Sat Patliputra Mahotsava (Mar).

Greek envoy to the Mauryan court, as "a city of light, where even wooden walls shine bright as glass".

Old Opium Warehouse

Gulzarbagh. □ Mon–Fri. Located in a walled compound on the river bank, the opium warehouse of the East India Company is now the Government Printing Press. Opium was packaged in its three long, porticoed buildings and sent by boat to Kolkata.

Enviroms

Maner, 30 km (19 miles) west of Patna, is a major centre of Islamic learning. It has the fine 16th-century mausoleum of the Sufi saint Hazrat Makhdam Yanya Maner. It is also famous for *laddoos*, a confection made of gramflour and molasses.





The magnificent 16th-century tomb of the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Sur at Sasaram

Sasaram 2

Rohtas district 158 km (98 miles) SW of Patna.

The dusty town of Sasaram, a three-hour drive west of Patna on the historic Grand Trunk Road (see p179), is famous for the **Mausoleum of Sher Shah Sur**, the great Afghan ruler (see p79). This mid-16th-century architectural masterpiece is, to quote architectural historian Percy Brown, a testament to, "the aesthetic capacity of the Indian architect at its greatest, and his genius at its highest."

With a spectacular setting in the middle of an artificial lake, the pyramidal sandstone structure rises in five tiers to a height of 45 m (148 ft). The first two tiers comprise of a stepped basement and a high terrace that seems to emerge from the water with a pavilion at each corner. The octagonal tomb is set on this plinth, and tapers towards the dome in three elegant layers of arches, crenelated parapets and small pilared kiosks. The broad dome is crowned by a large gilded lotus finial. All these elements combine to create a superbly proportioned structure that appears to float above the lake.

Curiously, the tomb is orientated eight degrees off its main axis – a mistake that the architect, Arwal Khan, has skilfully disguised. The brilliant yellow and blue tiles are still seen in places. Nearby is the tomb of Sher Shah's father, Hasan Sur, built by the same architect.

Sonepur 3

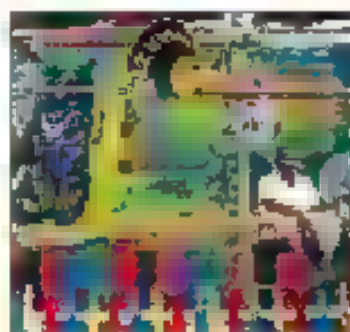
Saran district 25 km (16 miles) N of Patna. Bihar Tourism, Patna. (0612) 222 5411 Sonepur Mela (Oct/Nov)

North of Patna, across the 7.5-km (5-mile) long Mahatma Gandhi Bridge over the Ganges, is the little town of Sonepur, known for its annual *mela*, reputedly the largest live-stock fair in Asia. The month-long fair begins on the full moon of Kartik Purnima, which usually falls in October or November. The *mela* site is a sandy bank at the confluence of the Ganges and Gandak rivers, and attracts millions of sadhus, pilgrims and local rural families, as well as livestock traders from all over India. On sale are elephants, camels, horses and cows, and an array

of exotic birds. As a sideshow to the buying and selling of animals, grain and fodder, are several troupes of folk singers and magicians, *nautanki* (vaudeville) groups, dance bands, wrestlers and gymnasts, all exhibiting their skills on the sands. In between trading and entertainment, everyone takes a holy dip in the river during this most auspicious

period in the Hindu calendar. The state tourism department sets up a tourist village a week in advance of the fair, and cottages and tents can be booked at the office in Patna. Even if buying

an elephant (prices begin at about US\$200) is not on a visitor's agenda, the Sonepur Mela, with its colourful combination of religion, entertainment and commerce, is an unforgettable experience.



A mobile zoo at Sonepur's huge cattle fair



Elephants being bathed during the Sonepur Mela

Vaishali ①

Vaishali district 55 km (34 miles) N of Patna    Tourist Information Centre, Vaishali (06225, 284 425)

Set in the lush green landscape of north Bihar, dotted with groves of banana and tamar trees, Vaishali is an important religious site. Mahavira, founder of the Jain faith (see p396), is said to have been born here in 599 BC. It is also the place where the Buddha preached his last sermon (see p221). In the 6th century BC, Vaishali was a flourishing city under the Licchavi rulers who established one of the world's first city republics here. A well-preserved **Mauryan Stone Pillar**, dating from the 3rd century BC, with a life-size lion sitting atop it, is located 4 km (2.5 miles) west of the Tourist Lodge.

Close to the pillar is the **Ramkund Tank**, also known as the Monkey Tank, which is now a stagnant pond. According to legend, it was dug by monkeys who offered the



The lion atop the 3rd-century BC pillar, Vaishali

hanging Buddha a bowl of honey here – a scene often depicted in Buddhist sculpture and painting. Also near the pillar, are the ruins of a 5th-century BC brick stupa. It is believed to have been built by the Licchavi rulers soon after the Buddha's death to enshrine his ashes. Ongoing excavations have revealed the brick foundations of various other stupas. In 1996,

Japanese Buddhists built a temple and a huge white

Vishwa Shanti Stupa (World Peace Stupa) re-establishing Vaishali on the Buddhist pilgrimage circuit.





The renowned Bihar School of Yoga, inside Munger Fort

Munger ②

Munger district 180 km (112 miles) E of Patna    Tourist Information Centre, Fort Area, Munger (06344) 222 392

Picturesquely located on the banks of the Ganges, Munger is home to the famous **Bihar School of Yoga**, established by Swami Satyanand and now run by his disciple Swami Niranjananand. The school lies within the 15th-century Munger Fort and welcomes visitors. The fort was successively occupied by the Mughals, various regional rulers and the British. Near the north gate of the fort is an 18th-century British cemetery with ornate pyramid-shaped tombs.

 **Bihar School of Yoga**
Tel (06344) 222 430  daily

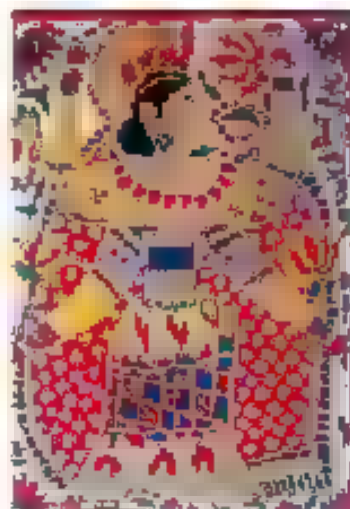
Deoghar ③

Deoghar district 180 km (112 miles) E of Patna    Tourist Information Centre, (06452) 222 422
 Mela (Jul/Aug)

Deoghar's **Baidyanath Dham** is an important Shiva temple in India. It is said to mark the spot where the heart of Shiva's consort Parvati fell, as the grief-stricken Shiva carried her corpse across the earth (see p279). An object of special worship is the linga inside the temple, one of Shiva's 12 *pyotrlingas* (see p202), believed to have miraculously materialized out of light. The month-long annual *mela* here attracts over 100,000 pilgrims every day.

MADHUBANI PAINTING

The vibrant Madhubani folk paintings (see p81) of north Bihar have now gained international acclaim and popularity. Painted on the walls of village homes by women, Madhubani art features motifs and themes inspired by Hindu mythology, nature and festivals, as well as by everyday life. Especially intricate compositions are created for the *kubbar* or bridal room, for the wedding night, usually featuring a god and goddess surrounded by a host of small birds and animals, and watched over by the sun, moon and stars. In recent years, with Madhubani women having participated in international exhibitions in foreign countries, new motifs have crept into their work, such as skyscrapers, aeroplanes and women in stiletto heels. The vibrant colours used are made of vegetable and mineral dyes, and the paintings are drawn with Jun bamboo sticks. Madhubani paintings are now also being done on paper and fabric, and are widely available for sale in many Indian cities.



A Madhubani painting, with its strong lines and colours

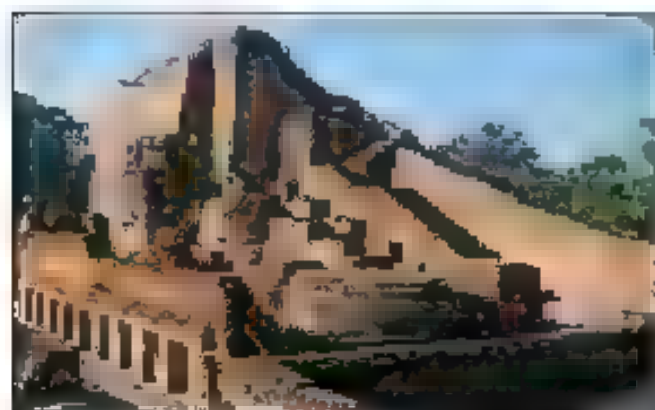
Nalanda 7



**Bodhisattva in
Temple 3**

Once the most prestigious centre of learning in Asia, the Buddhist University of Nalanda, founded in the 5th century AD, had over 5,000 international students and teachers, and a library of nine million manuscripts. Built on a hallowed site where the Buddha had often stayed, Nalanda flourished until AD 1199, when it was looted and destroyed by the Turkish raider, Bakhtiar Khalji. The

evocative ruins of its monasteries and temples still convey a vivid impression of the serene and ordered life of contemplation and learning that prevailed here.



★ Temple 3

Nalanda's main temple, and its largest structure (31 m/102 ft high), dates to the 6th century. It has a shrine chamber at the top and small stupas at its corners.



Temple 12

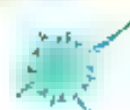
The remains of a torana stand in front of this 7th-century temple, which faces the row of monasteries.



Monastery 1A was probably built by a king of Samatira in the 9th century.

★ Votive Stupas

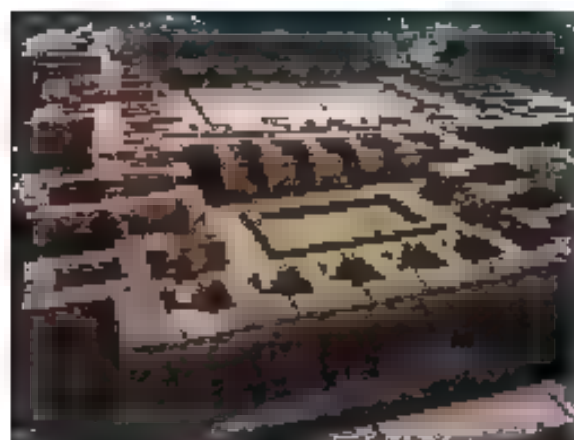
Located in the courtyard surrounding Temple 3, these have plaster images of standing Bodhisattvas and seated Buddhas.



0 metres 50
0 yards 50

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Temple 3
- ★ Votive Stupas
- ★ Dado Panels from Temple 2



A View of the Monasteries

Monks' cells surround a courtyard in each of the 11 monasteries. The ruins display skilful brickwork.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Nalanda district, 90 km (56 miles), S of Patna. From Patna. Bihar Tourism, Nav Nalanda, near bus station. daily Museum Sat-Thurs.

Temple 13 has a brick-making furnace to its north



Temple 14

Traces of painting can be seen here in a niche with a pedestal, where a large image of the Buddha once stood.

Monastery 8 has an imposing shrine in its courtyard. All the monasteries stand on terraces.

Museum



★ Dado Panels from Temple 2

This 7th century temple's basement, which is all that remains, has an elaborately sculpted dado with over 200 panels carved with deities, animals and floral motifs.



Brickwork

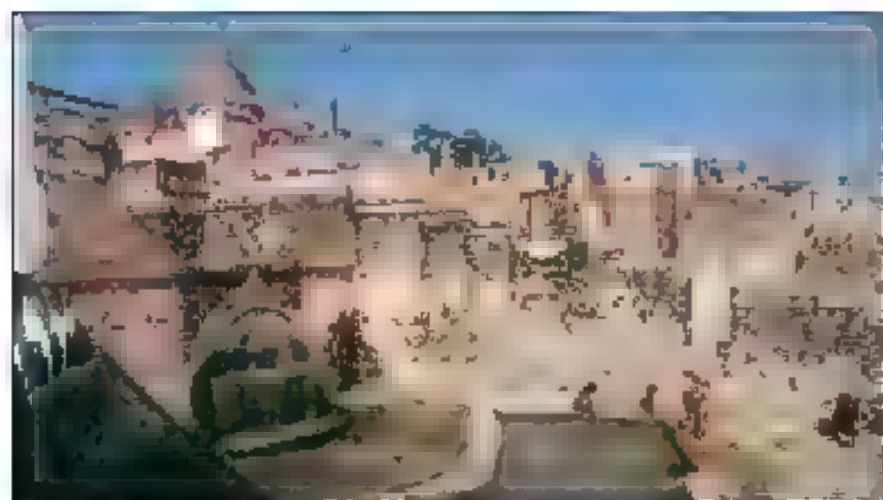
Layers of much earlier construction, some of it dating back to the 3rd century BC, are visible in the brickwork at Nalanda.

HUIEN TSANG IN NALANDA

The great Chinese scholar-monk Huiyen Tsang, traveled across forbidding deserts and mountains to come to Nalanda in the early 7th century AD. He spent 12 years both studying and teaching here, and was dazzled by Nalanda's "soaring domes and pinnacles, pear-red pillars carved and ornamented, and richly adorned balustrades". On his return to China he settled down at the Big Goose Pagoda in Xian, where he translated into Chinese the Buddhist scriptures he had brought back with him from Nalanda.



Chinese print of Huiyen Tsang



Hot sulphur springs at Rajgir, surrounded by temples and rest houses

Rajgir 8

Nalanda district 115 kms (72 miles),

SE of Patna ☎ 33,700 📠 📠

📠 Bihar Tourism, Kund Market, (06119, 252 73

Surrounded by five holy hills, the picturesque little town of Rajgir is important for Buddhists as well as Jains. Both Buddha and Mahavira, founder of Jainism, spent many months meditating and preaching here. The hills around are dotted with Jain temples, the ruins of monasteries and meditation caves. Dominating Rajgir is the large new Japanese-built marble and sandstone

Vishwa Shanti Stupa on Ratnagiri Hill with its four gilded statues of the Buddha. Visitors can go up to the stupa by chairlift. From here, a path leads to the adjoining **Gridhakuta Hill** ("Vulture's Peak"), a site much venerated by Buddhists. Two rock-cut caves here were a favourite retreat of the Buddha, and it was on this hill that he preached two of his most famous sermons. The incident of the Buddha subduing a wild elephant, a scene often depicted in Buddhist art, also took place in Rajgir.

To the west of Gridhakuta Hill is **Vaibhava Hill**, at the foot of which are hot sulphur springs, crowded with people seeking a medicinal dip. On top of the hill are the seven **Saptaparni Caves** where the First Buddhist Council met soon after the Buddha's death to record his teachings. Below them on the hill is the **Pippala Watchtower** a

curious rock and stone structure, with cells for guards. It dates to the 5th century BC, when Rajgir was the capital of the Magadha Empire (see p42) ruled by King Bimbisara who became a devotee of the Buddha. The remains of the great drystone cyclopean wall he built can still be seen on Rajgir's hills.

Environs

Pawapuri 38 km (24 miles) east of Rajgir, is sacred to Jains as the place where the founder of their faith, Mahavira, died in 500 BC. A lotus-filled tank, with the marble Jalmandir Temple in the middle of it, marks the site of his cremation.

Gaya 9

Gaya district 100 km (62 miles)

S of Patna ☎ 383,200 📠 📠

📠 Bihar State Tourist Office, Railway Station, (0631) 232 155

Stretching along the banks of the Phalgu river, Gaya along with Varanasi and Allahabad, is regarded as one of the three most sacred sites

for performing Hindu funeral rites. It is believed that Vishnu himself sanctified Gaya, decreeing that prayers for departed souls, performed here, would absolve all their earthly sins. Dominating the religious life of the city is the **Vishnupad Temple**, which is not open to non-Hindus, but no such restrictions apply to the picturesque ghats and sarines along the river front.

Environs

The **Barabar Caves**, cut deep into a granite hill, are 45 km (28 miles) north of Gaya, along a bumpy jeep road. They were the inspiration for the Marabar Caves in EM Forster's famous novel, *A Passage to India*. Dating to the 3rd century BC, these are the earliest examples of rock-cut caves in India. Of the four caves, built for ascetics on the orders of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, the two most impressive are the **Lomas Rishi** and **Sudama Caves**. They are remarkable for the highly lustrous polish on the stone, and for the way in which the caves have been shaped to imitate the rounded wood and bamboo dwellings which were common at that time. Even the interior walls have perpendicular grooves cut into the stone in imitation of bamboo strips. The façade of the Lomas Rishi Cave has fine lattice-work carving, and a charming row of elephants paying homage to stupas.

It is unsafe to explore this wild and rugged area without reliable guides, recommended by the Bihar Tourism office at Gaya's railway station.



Rituals being performed at the Phalgu Ghat in Gaya

In the Buddha's Footsteps

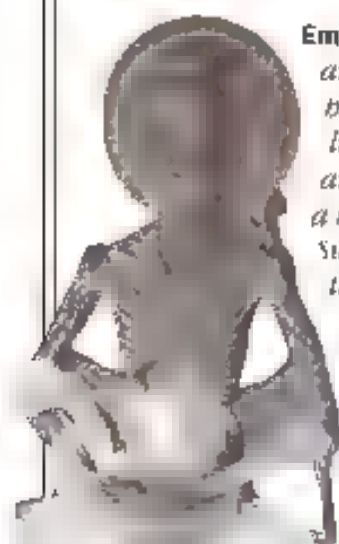
The Buddha was born in 566 BC as Siddhartha Gautama, prince of the kingdom of Kapilavastu. Though born in Lumbini, in Nepal, all the places associated with his life and his teachings are in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These are now part of a well-travelled circuit for



The Buddha's footprints

Buddhist pilgrims, who follow in the Buddha's footsteps from Bodhi Gaya, where he attained enlightenment, to Sarnath where he preached his first sermon, through other places he visited regularly, and finally to Kushinagar, where he died in 486 BC.

Renouncing his princely life Prince Siddhartha (represented here by a riderless horse) left his palace and his family at the age of 30 to search for answers to the meaning of human existence and suffering.



Emaciated by fasts and penances while he spent six years living with ascetics and wandering as a beggar, Prince Siddhartha found that such self-mortification gave him no answers.

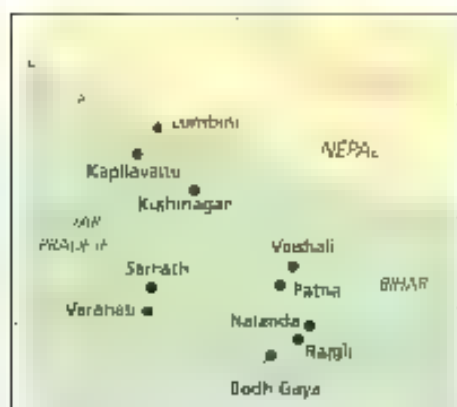


Enlightenment came at Bodhi Gaya where after meditating for 49 days under the Bodhi Tree, he discovered that the cause of suffering is desire and that desire can be conquered by following the "Eightfold Path" of Righteousness.

The First Sermon, delivered at Sarnath (see p.208), contained the essence of his teachings. Eschewing asceticism, rituals, caste and class distinctions, his Eightfold Path prescribed Right Thought, Understanding Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Concentration and Contemplation.



The Buddha's Death took place in 486 BC. He fell ill after eating wild mushrooms prepared by one of his followers, and died in a grove of sal trees at Kushinagar, where a stupa marks the site of his cremation.



BUDDHIST PILGRIM SITES



The Buddhist Trail attracts Buddhists from all over the world, including countries such as Japan and Thailand. Many stupas and temples along the pilgrimage circuit owe their existence to these devotees. This Buddha image was built by the Japanese.



The Thai Monastery in Bodhi Gaya, built like a traditional wat (temple)

Bodhi Gaya 10

Gaya district, 115 km (71 miles) SE of Patna 30,900 Gaya, 13 km (8 miles) N of town centre, then taxi or bus. Bihar Tourism, 34 Mahabodhi Market Complex, (0631) 240 0672 Monlam Chenmo Prayers (Jan/Feb.), Buddha Jayanti (May).

The holiest site for Buddhists from all over the world, Bodhi Gaya is the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. The focal point of the town is the **Mahabodhi Temple**, whose soaring pyramidal spire dominates the landscape. The temple is enclosed on three sides by a 1st-century BC stone railing, carved with lotus medallions and scenes from the Buddha's life, and includes the sacred **Bodhi Tree**, under which the Buddha meditated before he attained enlightenment.

The original temple at this spot was a circular stupa, built by the Mauryan king Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, but a major reconstruction in the 7th

century AD gave the temple its present form. In the 2nd century, it was severely damaged by Muslim invaders, but faithfully restored in the 14th century by Burmese kings, who also added the replicas of the main spire at each corner of the temple. Then, as Buddhism went into near eclipse in northern India, the temple site was flooded and silted over and effectively "lost" for centuries. Some Burmese Buddhists rededicated it in the late 19th

century. The temple ruins were then excavated and restored.

Today Bodhi Gaya once again flourishes as an international centre for Buddhism. Temples and monasteries built by various countries, including

China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, Korea, Bhutan and Nepal, dot the town. The **Thai Temple** is the most picturesque, while the modern **Japanese Temple** is remarkable for the 25-m (82-ft) high Buddha statue that towers in front of it. The **Bhutanese** and **Tibetan Monasteries** are filled with colourful murals and prayer wheels, and both are always thronged by red-robed monks.

In the courtyard around the Mahabodhi Temple, monks meditate at the stupas, novitiates have their heads shaved, and pilgrims pray before the Bodhi Tree. For three weeks during the winter, a tented city springs up around the temple, as thousands of monks and pilgrims congregate here for the Monlam Chenmo Prayers, often presided over by the Dalai Lama and other venerated figures from the Buddhist world.

Across the street the **Archaeological Museum** has fragments of the beautiful original 3rd-century BC temple railing, and bronze and



The 25-m (82-ft) Buddha statue, erected by the Japanese

stone images from the 8th to 12th centuries, which were excavated during the restoration of the temple.

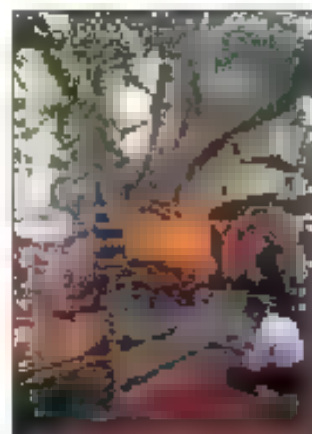
Archaeological Museum
 Sat–Thu.



Beautifully carved stupas in the temple courtyard

THE SACRED BODHI TREE

According to local lore, the original Bodhi Tree (*Ficus religiosa*) was cut down by Emperor Ashoka's wife because she was jealous of the time he spent at his Buddhist devotions. The emperor then revived the tree by nurturing its roots with gallons of milk, and built a protective stone railing around it. The tree that stands today is said to come from the same stock as the original tree. Ashoka's son Mahendra took a sapling from the original tree to Sri Lanka on one of his proselytizing missions. The tree flourished there, and its sapling was later brought back to be planted at Bodhi Gaya after the original tree had died.



Pilgrims gathered around the Bodhi Tree

Bodh Gaya: Mahabodhi Temple



Lotus carving on the Chakramana

The Mahabodhi Temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage monument marks the site where, more than 2,500 years ago, Prince Siddhartha meditated on the causes of human suffering, found the answers he was seeking under the Bodhi Tree and became the Buddha – the Enlightened One. The

best time to visit the complex is at dusk, when thousands of oil lamps bathe the temple in a golden light, and the sound of Buddhist prayers fills the air.

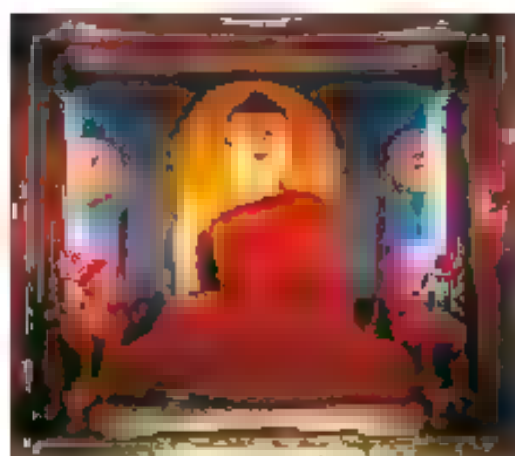


The Torana

The gateway to the temple is made of granite and covered with inscriptions from the Buddha's teachings. It dates from the 8th century.

The Spire

54 m (177 ft) high, is carved in tiers and capped by an umbrella-like finia.



The Buddha

This gilded stone image (late 10th century), in the main sanctum, has an aura of great serenity. The pedestal is carved with alternating lions and elephants.

The Bodhi Tree

under which the Buddha spent 49 days.

The entrance leads to the main sanctum with the Buddha image.



The Chakramana

Carved with lotuses, this sacred promenade was where the Buddha walked, meditating on whether to spread his message to the world.



The Vajrasihla

The red sandstone seat beneath the Bodhi Tree marks the spot where the Buddha sat. It probably dates to the 3rd century BC.

Parasnath 11

Giridih district, 179 km (111 miles)
NE of Ranchi. Madhuban

An important destination for Jain pilgrims, Parsvanatha is named after Parsvanatha, the 24th Jain *tirthankara* (see p396), who is believed to have attained nirvana here. Clustered on top of Sikay Hill, the highest peak in Jharkhand at 1,400 m (4,593 ft), are 24 Jain temples, each one dedicated to one of the Jain *tirthankaras*. The temple on the highest point is dedicated to Parsvanatha. Pilgrims begin their climb from Madhuban, a stopover at the foot of the hill, and it takes over three hours, through forested slopes. Palankuns are available to carry those who do not want to walk. The views from the top are magnificent.

Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary 12

Hazaribagh district, 107 km (66 miles)
N of Ranchi. Hazaribagh Rd Station, 67 km (42 miles) S of Pokharia, the main entry point, then bus Tourist Office, near bus stand, Hazaribagh town, located 16 km (10 miles) S of Pokharia. For permission, contact Divisional Forest Officer, Hazaribagh, (06546) 22 3340.

Set in the undulating Chhota Nagpur Plateau covered with tropical deciduous forests, this wildlife sanctuary is 16 km (10 miles) from Hazaribagh. Hazaribagh means "Thousand Tigers" and this quiet town's environs were once famous for their tiger population. However, as a result of deforestation, most

of the tigers are gone, and spotting a tiger from one of the ten viewing platforms is now rare. The 190 sq-km (73 sq-mile) sanctuary, established in 1954, is bisected by the Ranchi-Kolkata Highway, which, with its heavy traffic, has driven away many animals to other habitats. But there are plenty of wild boar, nilgai, and leopard, and its thick forests are a haven for birdlife.

Palamau National Park 13

Palamau district, 170 km (106 miles)
W of Ranchi. Daltonganj, 24 km (15 miles) NW of Betla, the main entry point. Tourist Office, Betla, (06562) 25 6513. For permits, contact the Deputy Director, Palamau National Park, Daltonganj. Jeeps are available at Betla.

Also known as Betla National Park, Palamau National Park, on the northwestern edge of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau, is set in hilly tribal country, with the Koel and Barha rivers flowing through it. The park

is dotted with bamboo, *sal* (*Shorea robusta*) groves, towering *mahua* (*Madhuca indica*) trees from whose pale yellow flower the area's tribal people (Oraons and Mundas) make a potent liquor, and grassland. The sanctuary is inhabited by wild elephants, deer, leopards, tigers (44 at last count in 1997) and several bird species. There are numerous watchtowers and hides that have been

strategically placed around the water holes. The picturesque ruins of two 16th-century forts, hot springs and a few tribal villages also lie within the park.

Netarhat 14

Palamau district, 156 km (97 miles)
W of Ranchi.

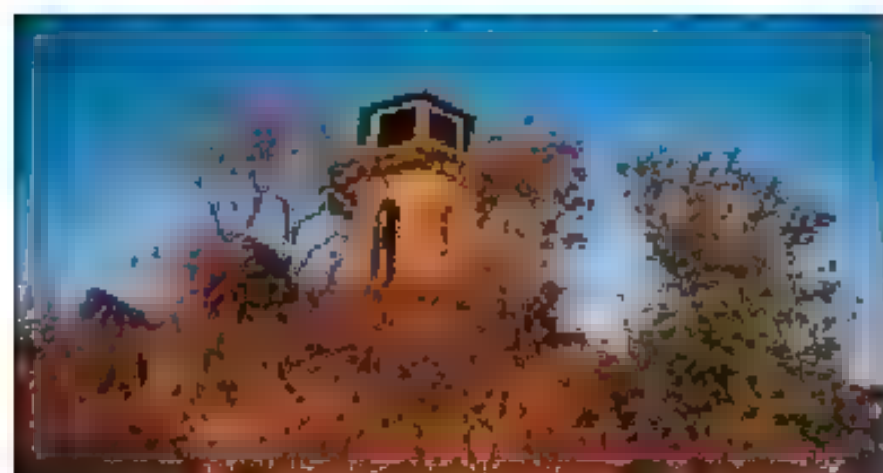
The only hill station in Bihar and Jharkhand, Netarhat is situated at an altitude of 1,140 m (3,740 ft) and lies deep within the forested Chhota Nagpur hills, just off the Ranchi-Hazaribagh Highway. There are several pleasant rambles in the hills around this little town, and fine views of the surrounding countryside from **Magnolia Point**. The scenic **Burhaga Falls** make an enchanting picnic spot. A curious building here is a huge wooden Swiss-style chalet, formerly the country retreat of the British governors of Bihar and now a boarding school for boys. The school authorities usually welcome visitors.



En route to Netarhat, through the picturesque Chhota Nagpur Plateau



Leopard at Palamau Park



Watchtower in the Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p697 and p726



Fields on the outskirts of Ranchi

Ranchi 15

Ranchi district 289 kms (180 miles)

E of Patna. ☎ 846,500. ✈ 5 km

(3 miles) S of town centre. 📺 📶

🏠 *Birsa Vihar Tourist Complex, Main Rd, (0657) 230 1230* 📺 daily 🏠 *Rath Yatra (Jun/Jul)*

The capital of the newly formed state of Jharkhand, Ranchi is a good base from which to explore the natural beauty of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau. The summer capital of Bihar in the days of the British Raj, Ranchi still attracts visitors keen to escape the heat and dust of Bihar's plains. The town's main attraction is the 17th-century **Jagannath Temple**, perched on a hill in the south-western outskirts. Like the Jagannath Temple at Puri (see p313), this temple also holds an annual chariot festival.

The Chhota Nagpur Plateau is the home of the forest-dwelling Munda and Oraon tribes. The wide-ranging exhibits and collections of artifacts in the **Ranchi Museum** provide a comprehensive picture of their lifestyles and social structures.

🏠 **Ranchi Museum**

🕒 Mon–Sat 🏠 public hols.

Environs

Hundru Falls, 45 km (28 miles) east of Ranchi is a picturesque picnic spot. This is the point where the Subarnarekha river drops down dramatically from the Chhota Nagpur Plateau to form a 100-m (328-ft) water-fall, which splashes into the pools below. The sleepy town of **McCluskiegunj**, 40 km (25 miles) northwest of Ranchi, is a quaint relic of the Raj. It was established as a settlement for Eurasians who felt they belonged neither to British nor to Indian society, and wanted a haven of their own. Today, only a

handful of the original settlers remain (many have emigrated to Australia), living out their old age in cottages crammed with their treasured collections of English china ornaments, and adorned with pictures of the British royal family.

Jamshedpur 16

East Singhbhum district 130 kms (81 miles) SE of Ranchi. ☎ 570,300

🏠 🏠 *Tourist Information Centre,*

Bistupur, (0657) 243 2892 📺 📶

daily 🏠 *Founder's Day (Mar)*

One of India's major industrial centres, Jamshedpur is a rare oasis of cleanliness and efficiency in this region. The planned township, surrounded by lakes, rivers and the pretty Dolma Hills, was established in 1906 by the Parsi tycoon, Sir Jamshedji Tata (see p446). He is regarded as the father of industrial development in India. The Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) was set up by him in this area because of the rich deposits

of iron ore and coal found here. The Tata empire continues to flourish, and several of its research, educational and cultural institutes here are open to visitors.



Oraon tribal girls dancing

FESTIVALS OF BIHAR & JHARKHAND

Maner Urs (Feb)

This festival honours the Sufi saint Sheikh Yahya Maneri with soulful

qawwali singing at his mausoleum, and a lively fair in the town.

Sarhool (Mar/Apr)

Jharkhand. The Munda tribes perform tree-worshipping ceremonies, followed by much dancing and feasting.

Jatra (Mar/Apr)

Jharkhand. The Oraon tribes hold lively dances during this festival, in which the young people choose their mates.

Buddha Jayanti (May)

Bodhi Gaya. A fair and special prayers are held to celebrate the Buddha's birth, attainment of enlightenment and nirvana.



Pilgrims with offerings for the Sun God at Chhat

Batsavriti (May/Jun) This festival commemorates the legend of Savitri, who brought her husband Satyavan back from the dead through the sheer intensity of her prayer. It is celebrated by married women who fast and pray, tie strings around banyan trees and offer sweets and fruits to images of Savitri.

Sonepur Mela (Oct/Nov)

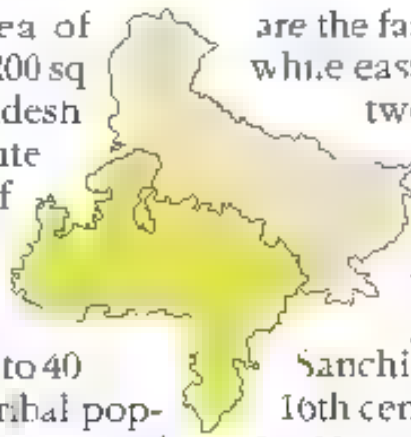
Sonepur (see p216).

Chhat (Oct/Nov) Flower-shaped pastries called *dekua* are made in every home during this three-day thanksgiving festival, dedicated to the Sun God, celebrated all over Bihar.



MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH

Covering a vast area of 443,406 sq km (171,200 sq miles), Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh constitute the geographic heart of India. Between them, they border on to seven states have one-third of India's forest cover, and are home to 40 per cent of the country's tribal population. Madhya Pradesh is crossed by the Vindhya and the Satpura mountains, and its main river is the Narmada. In the state's rugged north



are the famous Khajuraho temples, while eastern Madhya Pradesh has two of India's finest game sanctuaries, Bandhavgarh and Kanha. The scenic Malwa Plateau in the southwest has the great Buddhist stupa of Sanchi and the romantic 15th-16th century citadel of Mandu.

In November 2000 the thickly forested and remote southeast, with its predominantly tribal population, became the new state of Chhattisgarh.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

Bhopal ②
Chanderi ⑦
Gwalior ①
Gyaspur ④
Indore ③
Jabalpur ⑧
Mandla ⑥
Shivpur ⑤

Historic Sites

Ajajgarh ⑦
Bhopur ⑧

Khajuraho ⑩

Mandu ⑬
Orchha ③
Sanchi ⑪

National Parks

Bandhavgarh National Park ⑤
Kanha National Park ④

Hill Stations

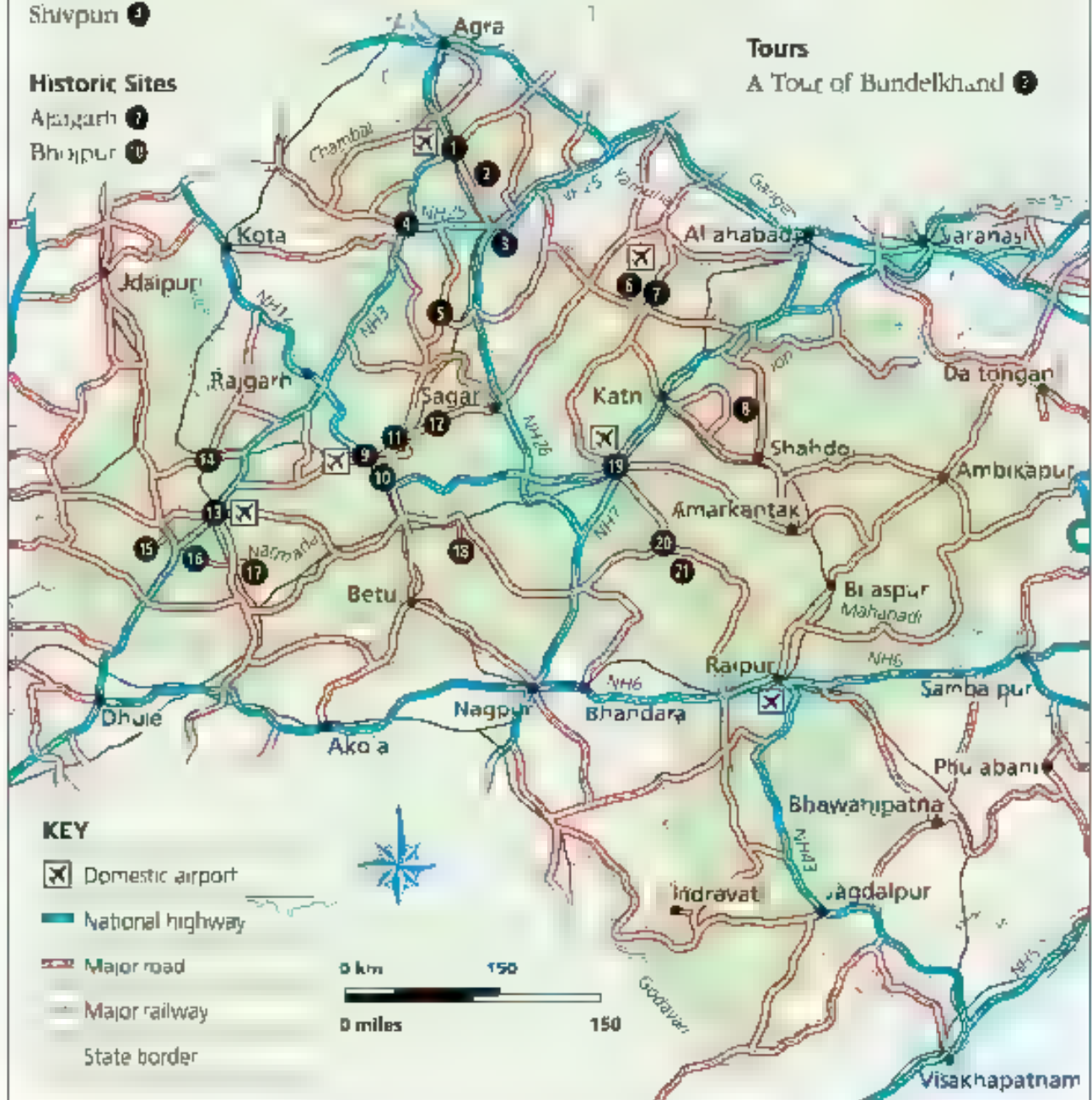
Pachmarhi ⑫

Temple Towns & Holy Places

Maheshwar ⑬
Omkareshwar ⑭
Ujjain ⑪

Tours

A Tour of Bundelkhand ②





The Durbar Hall of Jai Vilas Palace with its two gigantic chandeliers

Gwalior 1

Gwalior district 321 km (200 miles) S of Delhi. 827,000 14 km (8 miles) N of city centre

TO Hotel Tansen, MG Rd (0751, 223 4557) Tansen Music Festival (Oct/Nov).

Apart from **Gwalior Fort** the main attraction for visitors to Gwalior is the opulent, Italianate **Jai Vilas Palace** south of the fort, built for the maharaja of Gwalior by his architect, Colonel Sir Michael Ffose, in the late 19th century. Still the residence of the former Scindia rulers, part of the palace has been turned into a museum. The most magnificent room is the Durbar Hall. Hanging from its ceiling are two of the world's largest chandeliers, 13-m (43-ft) high and weighing 3 tonnes each. Before they were hung the strength of the roof was tested by having several elephants stand on it. Also on view is an extraordinary mechanical silver toy train that carried liquors around the maharaja's dining table.

North of the fort is Gwalior's old town, which has two interesting Islamic monuments – the 16th-century **Tomb of Mohammed Ghaus**, a Mughal nobleman, which has outstanding stone latticework screens, and the **Tomb of Tansen**, the famous singer who was one of the “nine jewels” of the Mughal emperor Akbar's court (see p186).

Jai Vilas Palace Museum
 Wed. Tel (0751) 232 2390

Gwalior Fort: Man Mandir Palace



Tile with parrots

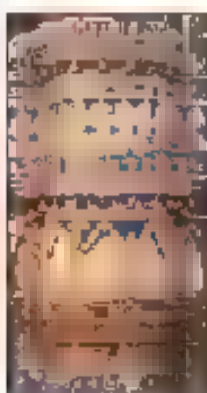
The massive Gwalior fort stretches for nearly 3 km (2 miles) atop a 100-m (328-ft) high sandstone and basalt hill. Its formidable bastioned walls, 10-m (33-ft) high, enclose exquisite temples and palaces, the most spectacular of which is the Man Mandir Palace. Built between 1486 and 1516 by Raja Man Singh of the Tomar dynasty, this double-storeyed palace is regarded as one of the finest examples of

Rajput secular architecture, embellished with superb stone carving and latticework. Brilliant blue, yellow and green tiles depicting parrots and peacocks, rows of ducks, elephants, banana trees and crocodiles holding lotus buds, decorate the Man Mandir's façade.



Courtyard

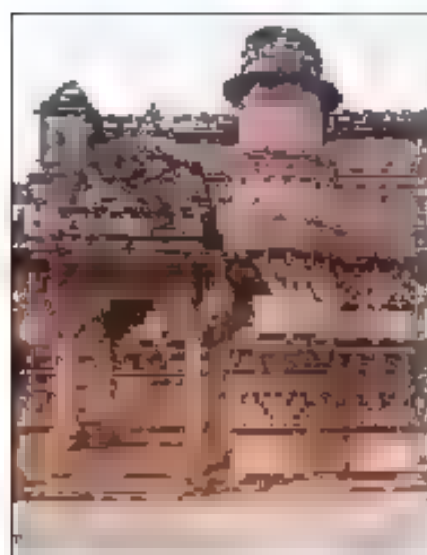
The interior courtyard with its carved pillars has rooms around it. Two subterranean floors, with fountains and baths, were later used as dungeons.



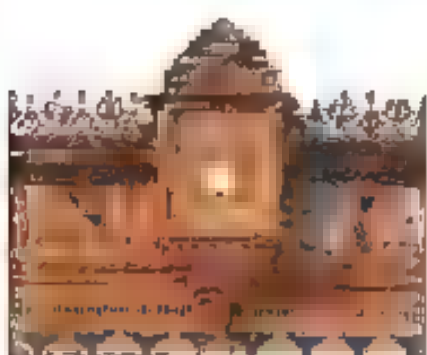
The Bastions

Rounded bastions, topped with cupolas and decorated with coloured tilework, break the severity of the fort's high walls.

Hathia Paur is the magnificent main gateway.



The lavishly carved and decorated south façade of Man Mandir



Stone Latticework

The oriel window, in the zenana quarters of the palace, is framed against intricately latticed stone battlements. A pair of caparisoned elephants flank the window.

Exploring Gwalior Fort

Described by a 16th-century Persian chronicler as "the pearl in the necklace of castles of Hind.", Gwalior Fort has had a turbulent history. Founded in the 8th century AD, it was successively ruled by a series of local Hindu dynasties, followed by the Delhi Sultans, the Mughals and finally the Maratha Scindias (see p471), who became the maharajas of Gwalior in the 18th century.

It was also briefly in British hands in the 19th century. The fort is best entered from the **Urwahi Gate** on its western side, where 21 colossal **Jain Sculptures** depicting the *tirthankaras* (see p396) and dating from the 7th to the 15th centuries, are carved into the rock face.

Lying to their left is the richly carved, 25 m (82-ft) high temple **Teli ka Mandir**, the tallest temple in the fort. Built in the 9th century and dedicated to Vishnu, it has an unusual *shikhara*, rounded at the top. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857 (see p53) British soldiers occupied the temple and used it as a soda factory. Situated to its north are a pair of 11th-century Vishnu temples, called the **Saas-Bahu** ("Mother and Daughter-in-Law") **Temples**. They are covered with superb sculptures of dancing girls and deities, though their *shikharas* were destroyed in an attack by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak (see p48) in the 12th century.

North of them is the **Hathia Paar** entrance gateway to the fort. The fort's most famous feature is the **Man Mandir Palace**, a 16th-century building with a central dome and a richly carved arch. At the northeastern edge of the fort is the 15th-century **Gujari Mahal**, built by Raja Man Singh for his Gujar (tribal) queen. Now the **Archaeological Museum**, its fine collection of Jain and Hindu sculpture includes the celebrated statue of the *sajabhanyika* (wood nymph), originally from the temple at Gyaraspur (see p243).



The 9th-century Teli ka Mandir, the tallest temple in the fort

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

N of city centre ☐ daily **₹3**

Son et Lumière Apr-Sep.

8.30pm daily; Oct-Mar 7.30pm

daily **Archaeological Museum**

☐ 10am–5pm Sun–Thu.

☒ Fri & public hols. **₹5**

Man Mandir Palace: its ornate pillars supporting a dome with a richly corbelled arch. At the northeastern edge of the fort is the 15th-century

Gujari Mahal, built

Raja Man Singh for his Gujar (tribal)

queen. Now the

Archaeological

Museum, its fine

collection of Jain and

Hindu sculpture

includes the cele-

brated statue of the

sajabhanyika (wood

nymph), originally

from the temple at

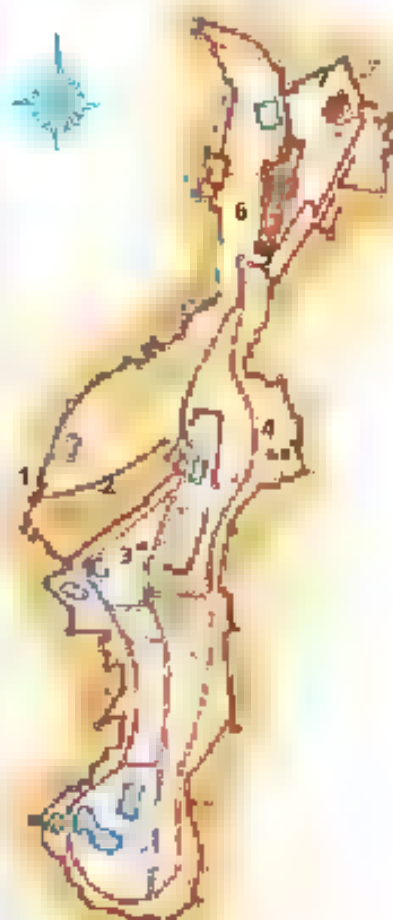
Gyaraspur (see p243).



Rock-cut Jain sculpture

GWALIOR FORT

- 1 Urwahi Gate
- 2 Jain Sculptures
- 3 Teli ka Mandir
- 4 Saas-Bahu Temples
- 5 Hathia Paar Gate
- 6 Man Mandir Palace
- 7 Gujari Mahal



0 metres 700

0 yards 700





A Tour of Bundelkhand ⑦

Gwalior and the adjoining region of Bundelkhand, named after the Bundela Rajputs, make up a culturally distinctive area in Central India. Countless forts and monuments, situated in a boulder-strewn landscape of great beauty, still echo with stories of the pageantry of the Bundela Rajput courts, and the valour of warriors such as the Rani of Jhansi (see p195). The area's glorious history and refined artistic traditions are reflected in the architectural treasures of Gwalior, the medieval city of Orchha, and the hilltop temples of Sonagiri.

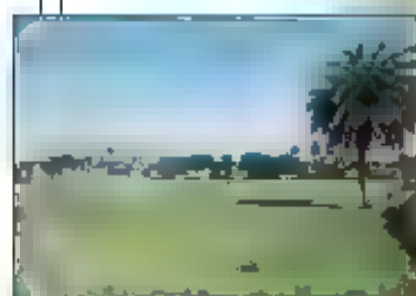


Gwalior ①

The capital of many dynasties since the 8th century AD, Gwalior (see p228) is the most splendid of the "gateways" to the Bundelkhand region.

Pawaya ②

The remains of an ancient fort can be seen in this capital of the Nag kings (3rd century AD) from the highway at Dabra.



Datia ④

This erstwhile Bundela capital, surrounded by numerous small lakes, has scenically located palaces on hillocks.



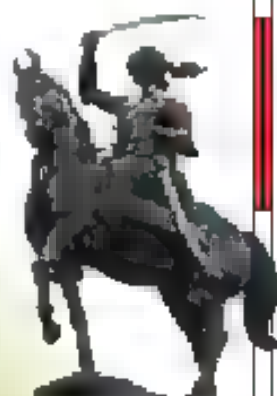
Sonagiri ③

This impeccably maintained complex of 77 Jain temples is approached through a thriving pilgrim settlement.



Jhansi ⑤

The town is known for its impressive fort and the heroic Rani Lakshmi Bai, who died leading her troops against the British in 1858.



KEY

- Tour route
- Other roads
- River

0 km 20
0 miles 10

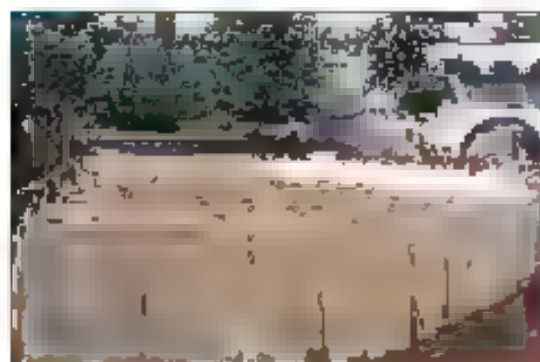
TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length, 120 km (75 miles)

Stopping-off points: Gwalior, Sonagiri, Datia, Jhansi, Orchha and Taragram provide convenient stopovers. There is a petrol pump at Dabra, after Gwalior. State tourism hotels and guesthouses are available at Gwalior, Datia, Jhansi and Orchha. Local buses run between the major stops.

Taragram ⑦

A fascinating handmade paper factory here is an interesting experimental centre aimed at upgrading local craftsmanship.





The marble cenotaph of Madhavrao Scindia at Shivpuri

Orchha ❶

See pp234–5

Shivpuri ❷

Shivpur district 117 km (73 miles)

SW of Gwalior ❷ 146,900

❷ ❷ ❷ MP Tourism, Railway Station, (0751) 254 0777

The summer capital of the Scindia rulers of Gwalior, Shivpuri was once a thickly forested region and a favourite hunting ground of the Moghals. Most of the elephants in Emperor Akbar's army were taken from these forests. Today, the main attractions are the 19th-century white marble cenotaphs of Madhavrao Scindia and his mother, which stand facing each other in a formal Moghal-style garden. With their mix of *shikharas*, spires, domes and cupolas, they epitomize Indo-Islamic architecture. Madhavrao's cenotaph is decorated with *pietra dura* work in lapis lazuli and onyx. There are life-size statues of the ruler and his mother and in accordance with family tradition their favourite foods are brought and left here every day. The colonial-style **Madhav Vilas Palace** has a ryteraces overlooking the town. The 156-sq km (60 sq-mile) **Madhav National Park** is a mixed deciduous forest with an artificial lake, surrounded by grasslands. **George Castle**, a hunting lodge, was built by Jiyaprao Scindia in honour of King George V who stayed here in 1911.

Chanderi ❸

Guna district 227 km (141 miles) S

of Gwalior ❷ 28,300

❷ MP Tourism, Tanabana, (07547) 25 2222

The medieval town of Chanderi is dominated by the **Kirtidurga Fort**, perched 200 m (656 ft) above the Betwa river, and overlooking an artificial lake, Kirtisagar. Built by the Pratiharas kings in the 10th century, Chanderi successively fell to the sultans of Delhi and Malwa, the Moghal emperor Babur and finally to the Marathas, becoming part of the Scindia kingdom of Gwalior. The entrance is through the Khani Darwaza ('Bloody Gateway'), marking the point at which the Moghal emperor Babur broke through the 6-km (4-mile) long granite walls of the fort when he conquered it in 1528. Cut into the

adjacent rock face are several imposing Jain statues. Most of the structures inside the fort are attributed to Sultan Mahmud of Malwa, and are executed in the graceful provincial Afghan style that distinguishes the buildings of Malwa (see pp24–9). The most ambitious edifice here is the **Koshak Mahal**, built in 1445. The sultan originally planned it as a seven-storeyed palace, but only managed to complete two storeys, each with balconies, rows of windows and beautifully vaulted ceilings. Other notable buildings are the domed and arcaded **Jami Masjid** and the **Badal Mahal** with its elegant gateway. Chanderi was once a flourishing centre of trade and an exploration of the town reveals large sandstone *havelis*, shops raised on pillars and ruined caravanserais lining the winding lanes. The town is also famous for its gossamer muslin saris and brocades.

Environs

Deogarh Fort

The Fortress of the Gods is 25 km (16 miles) south-east of Chanderi. Within it are a splendid display of sculptures from a group of 9th- to 10th-century Jain temples. Just below the fort is the 5th-century Vishnu Dasavatara Temple with its fine sculpture and carved pillars topped by celestial musicians. A statue of Vishnu asleep on Ananta the cosmic serpent (see pp24–5) is among the early masterpieces of Indian art.



Minaret detail, Kirtidurga Fort



Chanderi's fort, the scene of many battles

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp697–9 and pp726–7



One of the *chhatris* (cenotaphs) of the Bundela kings at Orchha

Orchha

Tikamgarh district 120 km (75 miles) SE of Gwalior Jhansi, 19 km (12 miles) NW of Orchha, then taxi or bus. MP Tourism, Sheesh Mahal, (07680, 25 2624) Ramnavami (Apr), Dussehra (Sep/Oct).

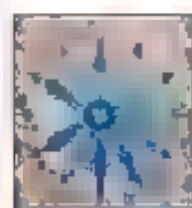
Orchha is dramatically positioned on a rocky island, enclosed by a loop of the Betwa river. Founded in 1531 it was the capital of the Bundela kings until 1738 when it was abandoned in favour of Tikamgarh.

Crumbling palaces, pavilions, *hamams*, walls and gates, connected to the town with an impressive 14-arched causeway, are all that remain today. The three main palaces are massed symmetrically together. These are the **Raj Mahal** (1560), **Jahangiri Mahal** (1626) and **Raj Praveen Mahal** (mid-1670s) named after a royal paramour.

The old town is dominated by three beautiful temples – the **Raj Raja**, the **Lakshmi Narayan** and the **Chaturbhuj**. A unique blend of fort and temple styles, the Chaturbhuj Temple is dedicated to Vishnu and has huge arched halls for massed singing, and a soaring spire.

Lying along the Kanchana Ghat of the Betwa are the 14 hauntingly beautiful cenotaphs of the Orchha rulers. Along with the many *sati* pillars in Jahangiri Mahal's museum, these serve as reminders of Orchha's feudal past when queens sometimes committed *sati* by jumping into their husband's funeral pyres.

Orchha: Jahangiri Mahal



Flower motif in turquoise stone

An excellent example of Rajput Bundela architecture, this palace was built by the Bundela king Bir Singh Deo and named after the Mughal emperor Jahangir who spent one night here. The many layered palace has 132 chambers off and above the central courtyard and an almost equal number of subterranean rooms. The square sandstone palace is extravagantly embellished with lapis azuli tiles, graceful *chhatris* and ornate *jali* screens. It also has a modest museum.



Chhatris

These cupolas give the palace's roofline a delicate and airy feel.

Carved niches line the outer walls.

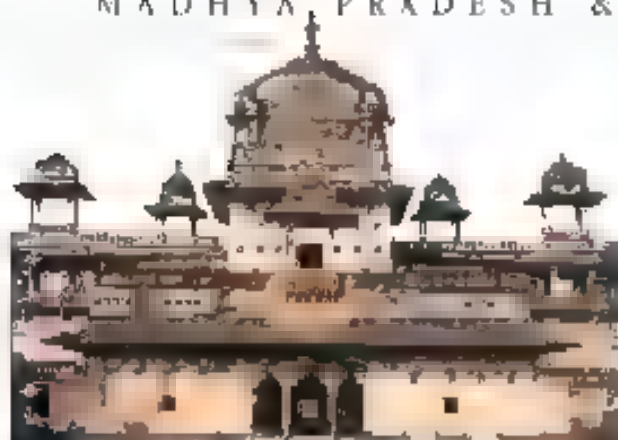


★ Entrance Gateway

The impressive entrance gateway, flanked by stone elephants, leads up to the central courtyard.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Entrance Gateway
- ★ Domed Pavilion

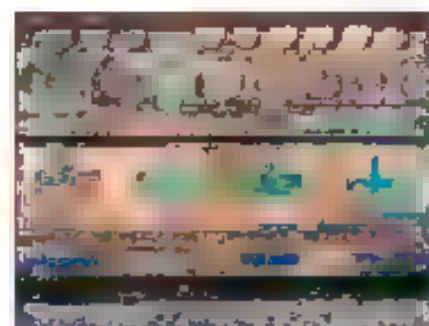


★ Domed Pavilion

A domed pavilion, with an apartment beneath marks the corners as well as the middle of each side of the palace

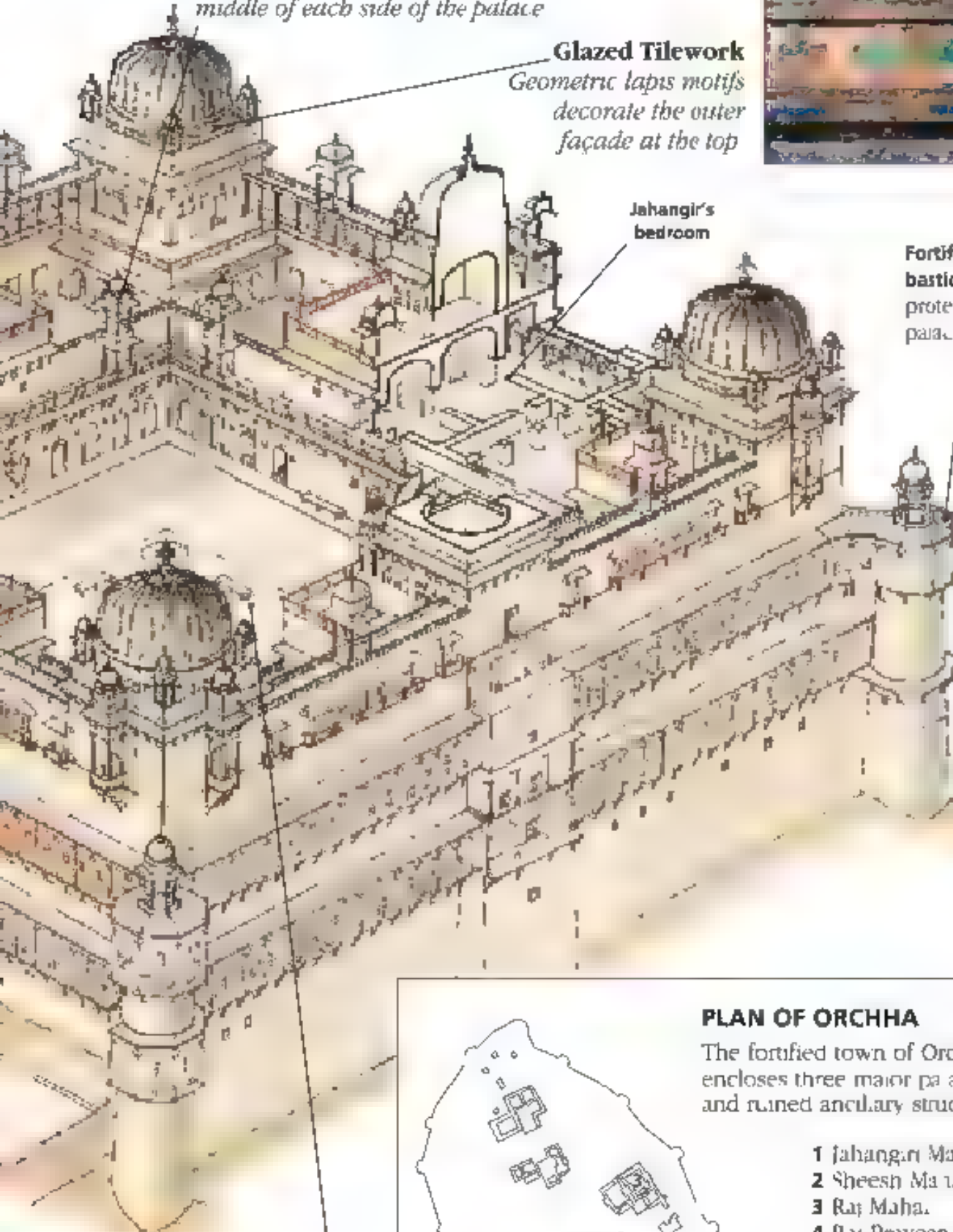
Glazed Tilework

Geometric lapis motifs decorate the outer façade at the top



Jahangir's bedroom

Fortified bastions protect the palace



The central courtyard can be viewed from each part of the palace and has a small museum in a set of rooms that run along it

PLAN OF ORCHHA

The fortified town of Orchha encloses three major palaces and ruined ancillary structures



- 1 Jahangir Mahal
- 2 Sheesh Mahal
- 3 Raj Mahal
- 4 Raj Praveen Mahal
- 5 Hamam
- 6 Stab le

KEY

□ illustrated area

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Palace Complex. ☐ daily
☒ public hols. ☒ MP Tourism,
 Sheesh Mahal, (07680) 25 2624
☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ Museum
☐ daily ☒ public hols

Khajuraho: Kandariya Mahadev Temple 6



Amorous couple

The magnificent group of temples at Khajuraho, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, were built between the 9th and 10th centuries by the Chandela dynasty which dominated Central India at that time. The most impressive of the temples is the Kandariya Mahadev, which represents the pinnacle of North Indian temple art and architecture. It is remarkable for its grand dimensions, its complex yet perfectly harmonious composition, and its exquisite sculptural embellishment. Over 800 sculptures cover the temple, depicting gods and goddesses, beasts and warriors, sensuous maidens, dancers, musicians and, of course, the erotic scenes for which the Khajuraho temples are famous.



View of the Kandariya Mahadev temple, built 1025–1050



★ Apsaras

Often carved as support bracket figures, the celestial nymphs reveal the sculptors' mastery of the female form. Full of natural charm and sensuous grace, they are shown as dancers, attendants of the deities, or simply engaged in everyday activities.



The Ardha Mandapa

The east-facing Ardha Mandapa (entrance porch) has an exquisite makara torana (ceremonial arch, flanked by two crocodile heads), and covered with floral tracery.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Apsaras
- ★ Main Shikhara
- ★ Erotic Panels



The Maha Mandapa

Carved pillars, nymph brackets, a corbelled ceiling and haunched windows add to the sumptuousness of the central hall's interior.



The first tier above the terrace is carved with processional friezes and goddesses

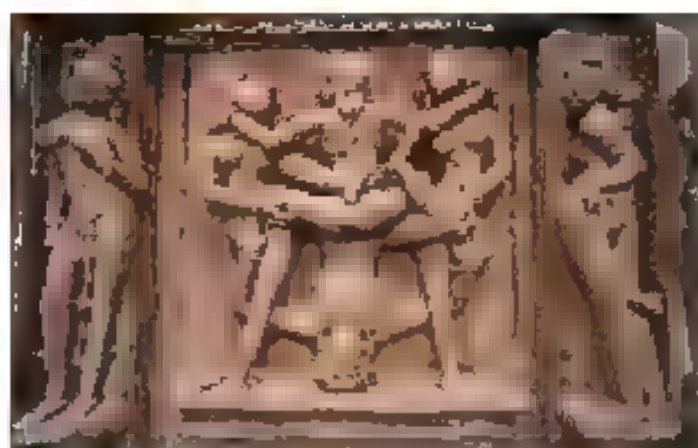


VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Chhatarpur district 275 kms (171 miles) SE of Gwalior [X] 5 km (3 miles) S of temples. [M] [I] MP Tourism, Chandela Cultural Centre (07686, 27 4051) ● Aug-Sep. [D] [F] Dance Festival (Feb-Mar). **Son et Lumière** 7.30pm daily [S]

★ Main Shikhara

The main spire soars to 30m (98ft), while 84 smaller spires rise in a crescendo towards it, to create the impression of a mountain range – more specifically, Mount Kailasa the abode of Shiva



★ Erotic Panels

The largest erotic panels are on the northern and southern facades, between the balconies. The erotic sculptures are variously believed to celebrate the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, serve as a love manual, or simply express an exuberant celebration of life and creation.

Garbhagriha

The dark and plain garbhagriha (inner sanctum), symbolizing a womb, houses a linga, the phallic symbol and principal object of worship in all Shiva temples. The sanctum is entered through a richly carved door frame.



Exploring Khajuraho

The 25 temples at Khajuraho represent the brilliant burst of artistic flowering that took place under the generous patronage of the powerful Chandela rulers, who made Khajuraho their peacetime capital. The remoteness of the temples' location saved them from the ravages of Islamic raiders, but also led to their being abandoned after the decline of the Chandelas in the 13th century. Hidden in a dense forest for 700 years, they were "rediscovered" in 1838 by Captain TS Burt of the Bengal Engineers. According to local tradition there were originally 85 temples, and ongoing excavations have unearthed extensive ruins in the area.

The Khajuraho temples are divided into three groups. The most important are in the **Western Group**, which, apart from the Kandariya Mahadev (see pp236–7), includes the **Lakshman** and the **Vishwanath Temples**. Both are similar to the Kandariya Mahadev in composition, sculptural embellishments and themes, but they also have outstanding individual features.

The superb ceiling of the entrance porch and the female bracket figures inside the Lakshman Temple (built in AD 930) are worth special notice. The pair of street singers on the south façade are also remarkable, with their expressions of intense absorption. The master architect and his apprentices are exquisitely sculpted on the subsidiary shrine in the temple's eastern corner.

Opposite the Lakshman Temple is a pavilion with a magnificent statue of Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu (see p679), covered with carvings of several deities.

In the Vishwanath Temple, dating to AD 1002, the *apsara* plucking a thorn from her foot (on the south façade) is outstanding, as is the *apsara* playing the flute, which can be seen in the interior chamber.

The **Matangeshwar Temple** (built AD 900), with its plain circular interior, is the only one still in everyday use (see p243).

The **Archaeological Museum**, near the entrance to the Western Group, has a fine

collection of sculptures found in the area, including a dancing Ganesha, and a fascinating frieze showing the construction of the Khajuraho temples, with scenes of stone being cut and transported.



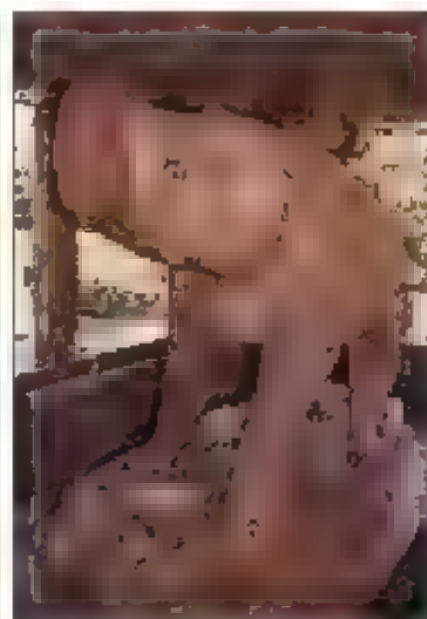
Apsara applying kohl

A short distance away is the **Eastern Group** of temples. The **Lan Parsvanatha Temple**, built in AD 950, is the most remarkable, for the intricately carved ceiling pendants in its entrance porch. Three exquisite sculptures here show *apsaras* applying kohl around their eyes, painting their feet (both on the south façade), and fastening ankle bells (on the north façade).

The last phase of temple-building in Khajuraho is seen in the **Southern Group**. The **Chaturbhuj Temple** (built AD 1090) has a superb, four-armed image of Shiva in the inner sanctum. It is the only



Image of Vishnu in the Lakshman Temple



The polished stone image of Varaha, Vishnu's boar incarnation

major temple in Khajuraho without any erotic sculptures.

Archaeological Museum

☐ Sat–Thu. Tel (07686) 27 2320

Environs

Raneh Falls 17 km (11 miles) south of the town of Khajuraho provide a cool retreat. The 19th-century **Rajagarh Palace** 25 km (16 miles) southeast of Khajuraho, is in the same Bundela style as the palaces at Datia and Orchha (see pp234–5). Situated 32 km (20 miles) southeast of Khajuraho along the Ken river, the **Panna National Park** has herds of deer, leopards, crocodiles and the scenic Pandav Falls. A favourite spot for tourists in the park is Giles Tree House restaurant, perched 20 m (66 ft) above the ground.

Ajaigarh

Panna district 75 km (45 miles) E of Khajuraho ☐☐ daily

This great Chandela citadel built in the 9th century AD and perched 500 m (1,640 ft) above the plains, is now a spectacular ruin. The steep path up to the top goes past gigantic sculptures carved into the sheer cliff face, including a particularly enchanting one of a cow and calf. Within the fort lie the ruins of once-magnificent palaces, broken fragments of statues and several poignant *sati* pillars marking the self-immolation of countless Rajput widows.

Bandhavgarh National Park



Indian tiger

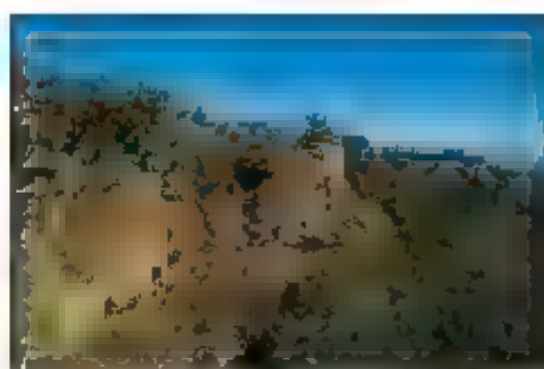
One of India's most important Tiger Reserves, the Bandhavgarh National Park sprawls across an area of 625 sq km (241 sq miles). Apart from some 50 tigers, the park's wildlife includes 250 species of birds, leopards, deer, jungle cats and packs of *dhole* (Indian wild dog).

Great rocky hills, lush deciduous forests, marshes and meadows make Bandhavgarh one of India's most scenic areas. A picturesque hilltop fort with fine sculptures is part of the park's attractions.



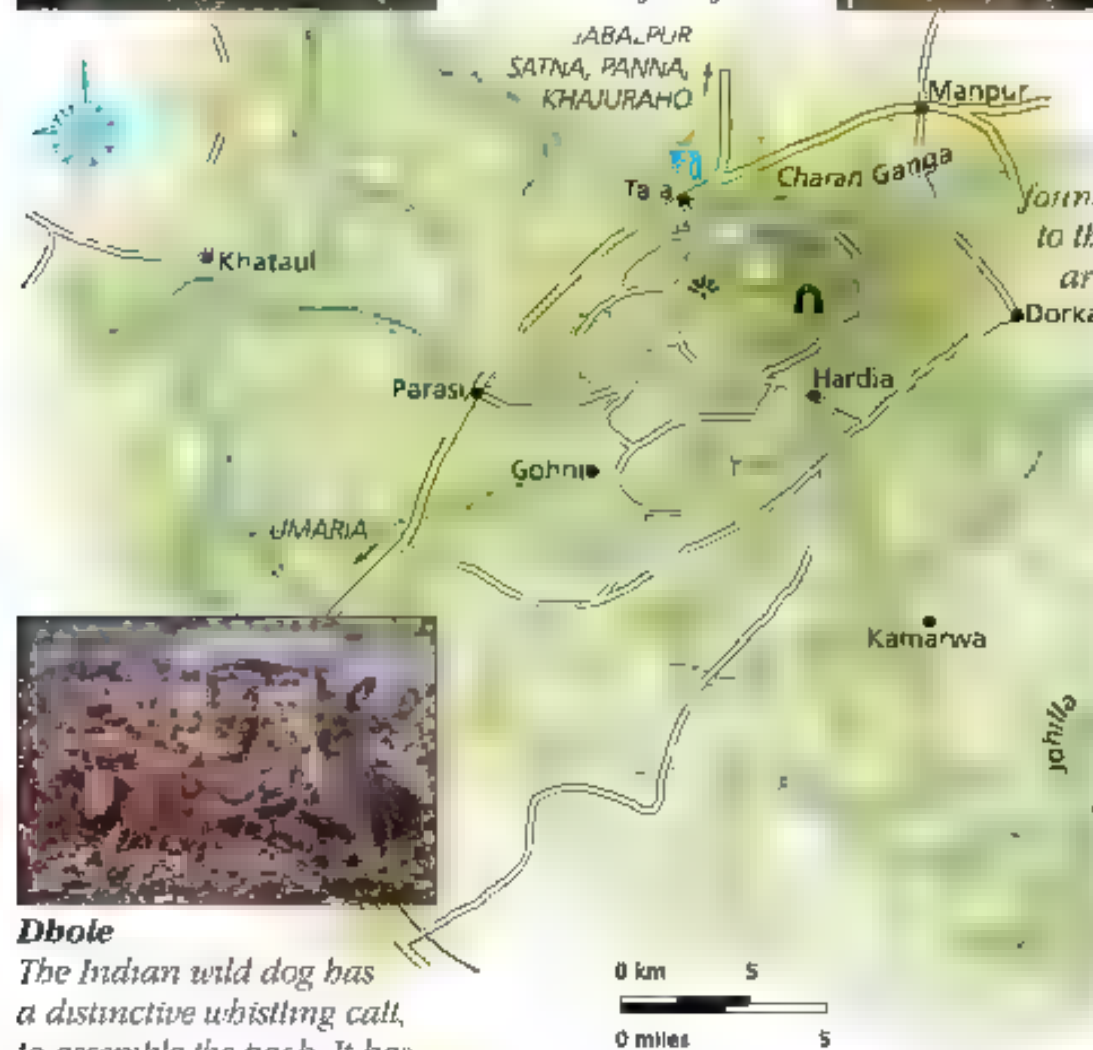
Sheshasaya Statue

A 11-m (36-ft) long statue of the reclining Vishnu, guarded by a seven-headed snake, is at the base of the fort.



The Fort

The ramparts of Bandhavgarh's fort, whose foundations date back to the 1st century AD, are a good place for birdwatching.



Dhole

The Indian wild dog has a distinctive whistling call, to assemble the pack. It has a red coat, large upright ears and a bushy tail.

KEY

- Park boundary
- Major road
- = Minor road
- 🏛 Temple
- ℹ Tourist information
- 👁 Viewpoint
- 🏰 Fort

THE WHITE TIGER OF REWA

In 1951 the maharaja of Rewa captured a white tiger in these forests. Named Mohan, he was mated in captivity with several tigresses, and all the white tigers in zoos across the world today are Mohan's descendants. A pair can be seen in the Bhopal zoo (see p241). Since 1951 no other white tiger has been seen in the Bandhavgarh region. The white tiger is an "evolutionary colour aberration" and not an albino, nor a separate sub-species.



The white tiger, very rare in the wild



Crested Serpent Eagle

This large eagle preys on snakes and lizards.

Bhopal 9



Arch detail,
Moti Masjid

The capital of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal was founded in the 11th century by Raja Bhoj of the Paramara dynasty. By the 18th century, it was held by a Muslim dynasty whose rulers included several remarkable women, the Begums of Bhopal. The city, ringed by hills, stretches along the shores of two artificial lakes, the Upper and Lower Lakes. The old quarter, north of the Lakes, is a maze of

narrow lanes, bazaars and mosques. To the south is the new city with its leafy suburbs and industrial enclaves. In December 1984, a toxic gas leak from the Union Carbide factory claimed the lives of 5,000 people, in one of the world's worst industrial disasters. With the wounds of this tragedy now healing, Bhopal is a good base for visiting some of the state's fascinating sites.

☐ Taj-ul-Masjid

Hamidia Rd. ☐ daily ☑ to non-Muslims on Fri & on Muslim festivals.

The most imposing monument in Bhopal, this large, pink-washed mosque was begun by Sultan Jehan Begum in 1878 but was left unfinished for almost a century before being completed in 1971. A progressive ruler, the begum established the city's postal system and hospitals, but virtually bankrupted the royal treasury as a result of her ambitious schemes. The enormous courtyard of the mosque has a *dukka* (water tank) for ritual ablutions, and the vast prayer hall is striking for its rows of pillars. This grandiose mosque is surmounted by three white domes and flanked by two 18-storeyed minarets. Its general ambience is majestic rather than beautiful.

☐ The Chowk

Bazaar ☐ Tue–Sun. Jami Masjid

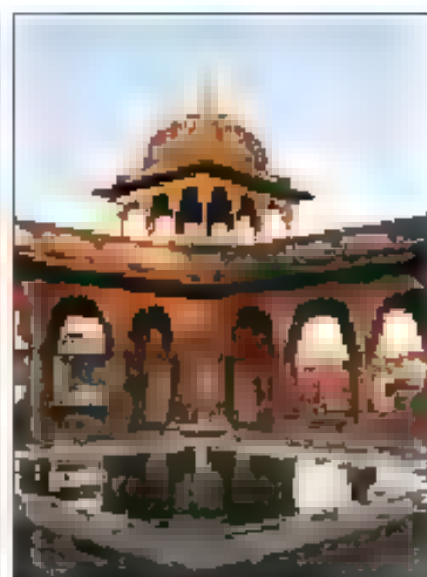
☐ daily ☑ to non-Muslims on Fri & on Muslim festivals.

Situated in the centre of the old quarter is the Chowk (literally, main square).

Streets radiate out from it each one specializing in a particular type of goods – the Bhopali *batuas* (elaborately beaded purses) for which Bhopal is famous, tussar silk, caps, drums and spices. *Havelis* line the streets, with wooden-fronted shops on the ground floor, and elaborate wrought-iron balconies above. Dominating the area is the **Jami Masjid** with its gold finials, built in 1857 by Qudsia Begum, another of Bhopal's female rulers. It is surrounded by shops selling silver jewellery. South of the Chowk is another mosque, the **Moti**



Bhopali
batua



Fountain and tank inside the 19th-century Moti Masjid

Masjid ("Pearl Mosque") built in 1860 by Qudsia Begum's daughter and successor. With its striped dome and tapering sandstone minarets, it looks like a smaller version of the Jami Masjid in Delhi (see p86).

Also worth visiting in this area is the **Shaukat Mahal**, a 19th-century Indo-Saracenic cum Rococo palace. Built by a French mercenary who claimed to be a descendant of the Bourbons, it now houses government offices, though visitors are usually allowed inside by the guards.

☐ Bharat Bhavan

Shamla Hills. Tel (0755) 266 0353

☐ Tue–Sun ☑ 11

A large cultural complex, Bharat Bhavan was established in 1982 to showcase and promote India's rich tribal and folk art heritage. To the right of the entrance is the Tribal Art Gallery, a superb collection that includes votive objects, terracotta figures, masks, wall paintings, wood-carvings, and the distinctive metal sculptures created by craftsmen from Bastar (see p253). A gallery across the courtyard exhibits contemporary Indian art. Bharat Bhavan is also the venue for regular performances of theatre, music and dance in the evenings.

☐ State Museum

Shamla Hills. Tel (0755) 266 1856

☐ Tue–Sun ☑ 11

A collection of 12th-century Jain bronzes, found in Dhar district in western Madhya Pradesh, form the highlight of this museum's collection. It



The Taj-ul-Masjid, Bhopal's most imposing monument

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp697–9 and pp726–7



Replica of a tribal hut in the Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya

also has a series of striking stone sculptures, mostly from the 6th to 10th centuries. Older pieces include *yakshis* (female attendants) dating to 200 BC and a Standing Buddha in black granite. The museum shop has good plaster replicas of some sculptures for sale.

III Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (Museum of Man)

S of Shama Hills. ☐ Tue–Sun ☐ Set in the hills overlooking the Upper Lake, this museum, which sprawls over a 40-ha (99-acre) site, has authentic replicas of Indian tribal dwell-

ings, built by the tribal people themselves. Tribal cultures from all over the country are represented in the museum, through comprehensive displays of utensils, ritual objects, musical instruments, tools, murals, carvings, jewellery and costumes. An Introductory Gallery, in a thatched hut, explains the museum's layout.

✕ Van Vihar National Park

☐ Wed–Mon, 6am–10.30am, 3pm–5.30pm ☐

The most famous inhabitants of this large park, near the Upper Lake, are the white tigers (see p.239). A good time to see these rare creatures is at

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bhopal district 744 km (462 miles) S of Delhi. 📍
1 433 900 ☒ 11 km (7 miles);
W of city centre 📍
📞 MP Tourism, Paryatan
Bhavan, Bhadbhada Rd (0755)
277 4340 📞 Tue–Sun

about 4pm, when they come to the edge of their enclosure for their evening meal. The zoo is also home to lions, leopards and Himalayan bears.

III Birla Museum

Near Lakshmi Narayan Temple. Tel (0755) 255 1338. ☐ Thu–Tue ☐

This museum has a well-displayed collection of stone sculptures dating from the 7th to 12th centuries. Shiva, Vishnu and various goddesses are shown in their different incarnations. Particularly impressive are Vishnu in his boar (Varaha) incarnation, Goddess Durga in her ferocious Chamunda form, and Shiva and his consort Parvati in their celestial home on Mount Kalasa. Next to the museum is the large, recently-built and brightly painted Lakshmi Narayan Temple overlooking the Lower Lake.





**Sculpture from the incomplete
Bhojeshwar Temple, Bhopur**

Bhojpur 10

Bhopal district 28 km (17 miles) SE
of Bhopal  **MP Tourism,**
Bhopal, (0755) 277 4340.





Founded by the 11th-century Paramara king, Raja Bhoja, who also established Bhopal (see p240), Bhopal is dominated by the monumental, though incomplete **Bhojeshwar Temple**. Impressive sculptures cover parts of its unfinished corbelled ceiling and its entrance doorway.

Inside, on a tiered platform, is an enormous stone Shiva-linga 2.3-m (8-ft) high and 5.3 m (17 ft) in circumference. Etched on the paving stones and walls in the forecourt are the architect's detailed plans for the first sex temple. While on the northeast side are the remains of a massive earthen ramp used to haul stone up to the roof.

Environ

The **Bhimbetka Caves** with their prehistoric paintings, dating back some 12,000 years, are about 17 km (11 miles) south of Bhopur.

Sanchi 11

Raisen district 46 km 29 miles) NE
of Bhopal    *traveller's*
Lodge, (07482) 26 6723 
Chaitragiri Vihara Festival (Nov)

The tranquil hill of Sanchi contains one of India's best preserved and most extensive Buddhist sites. From the 3rd century BC to the 7th century AD, this was a thriving Buddhist establishment of stupas and monasteries. The complex of buildings at Sanchi therefore show the development of Buddhist art across different periods, stretching over more than a 1000 years.

Founded by Emperor Ashoka (see p.42) whose wife came from nearby Vidisha Sanchi grew and prospered under subsequent dynasties, largely through the generous patronage of the rich merchants of Vidisha. By the 4th century, Buddhism was on the wane in India and Sanchi was deserted and half forgotten, until it was rediscovered in 1888 by General Taylor of the Bengal Cavalry. Between 1912 and 1919 it was extensively restored by the Archaeological Survey of India.



**Votive stupa with
Buddha image**

(ASI) under Sir John Marshall. It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1989. Most of Sanchi's buildings are within an enclosure at the top of the 91-m (299-ft) hill dominated by the **Great Stupa** and its four superb gateways (see pp244-5). Nearby to its north, is the smaller **Stupa 3** (built 2nd century BC), with its single gateway which contained the relics of two of the Buddha's closest disciples, Sariputra and Maudgalyana.

Also within the enclosure are several monasteries, which are located on the eastern, western and southern sides. Of these the 10th-century **Monastery 51** is the most interesting with its courtyard surrounded by a colonnade, behind which are 22 monks' cells. **Temple 17**, on the eastern side, dates to the 5th century AD. A flat-roofed structure with columns surmounted by double-headed lions, this is the earliest well-preserved example of an Indian stone temple, and its style and features considerably influenced the later development of temple architecture.

Located below the Great Stupa, just outside the enclosure, is **Stupa 2** (2nd century BC), whose railings are carved with lions and mythical beasts. Also depicted is a horse with stirrups. Near the South Gateway of the Great Stupa lies the broken shaft of an Ashokan Pillar, made of highly

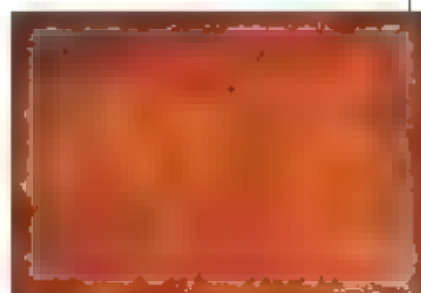
THE BHIMBETKA CAVE PAINTINGS



Cave shelter at Bhimbetka

In 1957 the Indian archaeologist VS Wakanker discovered over 1 000 cave shelters in a rocky sandstone ridge near Bhumbetka village, surrounded by thick deciduous forest. More than 500 of these were covered with paintings done in bold, fluent lines, with the same power and energy as the cave paintings in Lascaux, France, or the Kalahari paintings in Africa. The earliest paintings, from the Upper Paleolithic period, are of large animals such as bison and rhino, done in red pigment, with humans drawn in green.

The largest number of paintings are from the Mesolithic period (8000 to 5000 BC), and depict vignettes of daily life, hunting scenes and a range of animals including, curiously, a graffe. Later caves 1st century AD show battle scenes and Hindu deities. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003.



Mesolithic period cave painting from Bhimbetka



Stupa 3, which originally contained the relics of the Buddha's disciples

polished stone. It was used as a sugarcane press by a local landlord in the 19th century. Its four-headed lion capital, similar to the one at Sarnath (see p268) but not as fine, can now be seen in the Sanchi Archaeological Museum. Some other notable exhibits here include a pair of winged Mauryan lions, sculpture, friezes from the gateways and statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

Environs

Besnagar, situated 10 km (6 miles) northeast of Sanchi, on the confluence of the Beas and Betwa rivers, was once a prosperous centre of trade. A unique relic of its past is the **Heliodorus Column**, with its fluted bell-shaped capital dating to 133 BC. Dedicated to the god Vasudeva, it was erected by the envoy of the Greek king of Taxila (now in Pakistan), to commemorate his conversion to Hinduism.

Udayagiri, 20 km (12 miles) north of Sanchi, has fine examples of 5th-century AD rock-cut caves, carved into

the hillside. Most notable is **Cave 5**, with its impressive sculpture of Varaha, the incarnation of Vishnu as a boar rescuing the earth goddess from the churning ocean.

Raisen Fort straddles a hilltop 23 km (14 miles) southeast of Sanchi. Its 13th-century gates, palaces, temples and pavilions have lain in ruins ever since a devastating attack in the 16th century by the Sultan of Gujarat, but the site is still hauntingly atmospheric.

Udayapur, 70 km (42 miles) northeast of Sanchi, has the exquisite 11th-century red sandstone **Nilkanteshwar Temple**, dedicated to Shiva. It is comparable in scale and sculptural beauty to the Khajuraho temples (see pp236–8). The symmetry of its graceful *shikhara*, rising in a crescendo of delicately carved stone, is broken by a curious figure that seems to dangle in space. According to local legend, this figure represents the architect trying to climb to the heavens.

Gyaraspur ⑩

Vidisha district, 64 km (40 miles) NE of Bhopal. MP Tourism, Bhopal, (0755) 277 4340.

The ornately carved 9th-century **Maladevi Temple** at Gyaraspur is built on a hillside. Partly carved out of a rock, it is now in ruins, and much of its superb sculpture has been pillaged. The exquisite statue of the *salabhanjika*, which is now the pride of the Archaeological Museum at Gwalior Fort (see p229), was salvaged from here.



Sculpture of Varaha, Vishnu's boar incarnation, from Cave 5, Udayagiri

FESTIVALS OF MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH

Shivratri (Feb/Mar), Khajuraho. The celestial wedding of Shiva and Parvati is celebrated with colourful processions and an elaborate night-long re-enactment of the wedding ritual in the Matangeshwar Temple.

Dance Festival (Feb/Mar) Khajuraho. During this week-long festival, India's leading classical dancers perform in front of the Kandariya Mahadevi Temple. The postures and grace of the dancers are echoed in the exquisite stone sculptures of *apsaras* in the temple.



Classical dancer at Khajuraho Dance Festival

Dussehra (Sep/Oct), Chhattisgarh. This ten-day festival in honour of Rama is celebrated with great gaiety in the Bastar tribal heartland of Chhattisgarh. Along with lively dramatized episodes from the *Ramayana* (see p27), there are also colourful tribal fairs with dancing, cock-fights and spirited bartering of goods.

Chartyagiri Vihara Festival (Nov), Sanchi. Buddhists from all over the subcontinent gather at Sanchi to view the relics of two of the Buddha's closest disciples.

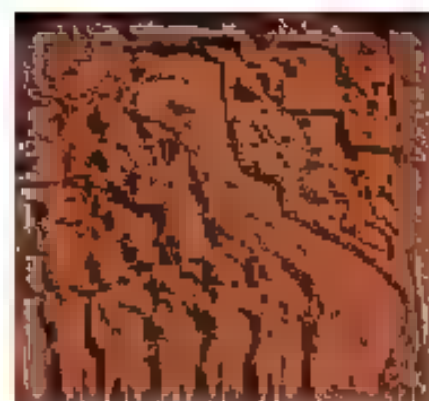
Tansen Music Festival (Nov/Dec), Gwalior. Named after the great musician Tansen, one of the "nine jewels" at the court of Mughal emperor Akbar, this festival brings together the best classical musicians and singers from all over the country.

Sanchi: The Great Stupa



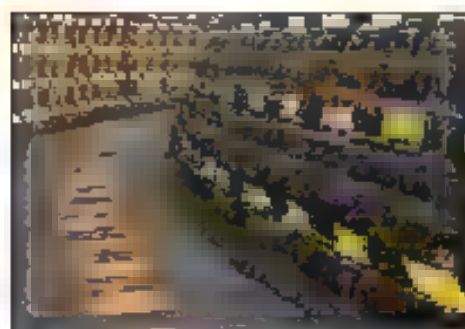
Animals on the torana

India's finest surviving Buddhist monument and World Heritage Site, the Great Stupa at Sanchi, was built in the 2nd century BC. Its hemispherical shape is variously believed to symbolize the upturned alms bowl of a Buddhist monk, or an umbrella of protection for followers of the Buddhist dharma. The stupa's main glory lies in its four stone *toranas* (gateways), added in the 1st century BC. Their sculptures replicate the techniques of wood and ivory carving, and cover a rich variety of Buddhist themes.



West Gateway

This animated scene from the Jataka Tales shows monkeys scrambling across a bridge to escape from soldiers.



Circumambulatory Paths

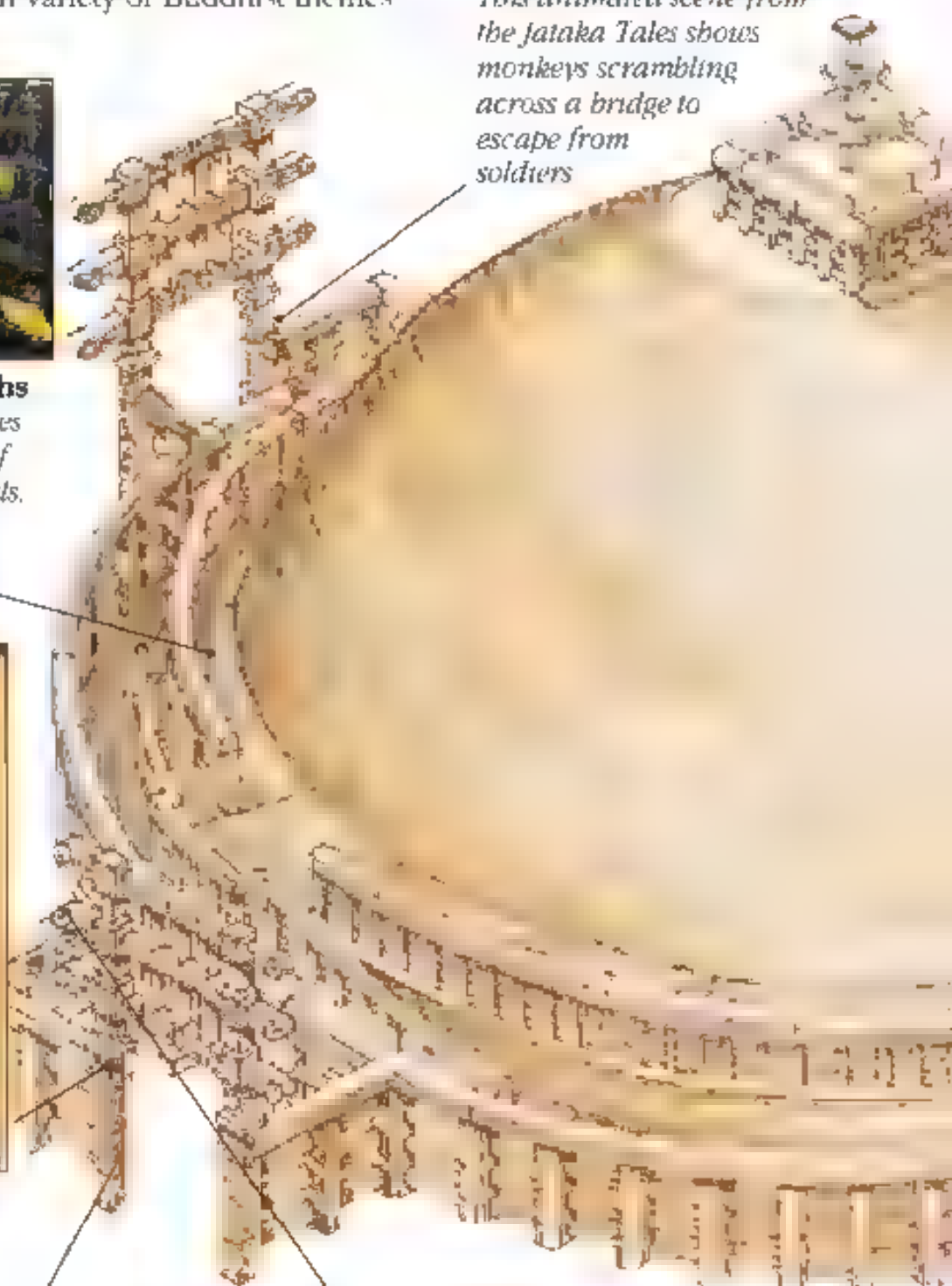
The paths have balustrades carved with medallions of flowers, birds and animals, and the names of donors who funded them.



South Gateway

The Wheel of Law being worshipped by devotees, symbolizes the Buddha.

The four gateways show scenes from the Buddha's life, and episodes from the Jataka Tales. The Buddha is not depicted in human form, but only through symbols such as a Bodhi Tree, footprints or a wheel.



Detail of Architrave

The intricate carving on the architraves is believed to be the work of ivory and wood carvers.



★ North Gateway

Sujata, the village chief's daughter offers the Buddha (represented by the Bodhi Tree) kheer (rice pudding) as the demon Mara sends the temptress to seduce him

The **vedika** (railings) are an impressive recreation in stone of a typical, wooden railing design. They were the inspiration for the stone railings around Sansad Bhavan or the Parliament House (see p74) in New Delhi.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

daily **Archaeological Museum** (07482) 26 66 1
 Fr. In accordance with Buddhist tradition, walk around the stupa in a clockwise direction



The Great Stupa and its West Gateway

Enclosing a smaller brick stupa built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, the Great Stupa is capped by a three-tiered stone umbrella, symbolizing the layers of heaven

Statues at the Buddha, meditating, added in the 5th century AD, face each of the gateways.



East Gateway

This scene shows a royal retinue at the palace of Kapilavastu, the Buddha's home before he renounced his princely life

★ Salabhanjika








Supporting the lowest architrave of the East Gateway is this sensuous, voluptuous tree nymph, gracefully positioned under a mango tree

STAR FEATURES

- ★ North Gateway
- ★ Salabhanjika



Indore ⑬



Indore district: 187 km (116 miles) W of Bhopal.  1,597,400.  10 km (6 miles) W of town.    MP Tourism, behind Ravindra Natyaagriha, (0731) 252 8653.  Mon–Sat  Ganesha Chaturthi (Asg/Sep).

The bustling commercial centre of Madhya Pradesh, Indore was a princely state until 1947, ruled by the Maratha Holkar dynasty.

At the heart of the city, surrounded by a lively bazaar, is the **Rajwada Palace**, now just an imposing façade following a fire in 1984. A short walk west of it stands the **Kanch Mandir** “Glass Temple”, an opulent 19th-century Jain temple, decorated with mirrors, chandeliers, and murals on glass.

On the southwestern edge of Indore is the opulent Lalbagh Palace, built by the rulers of Indore in the early 20th century. Now a museum called the **Nehru Centre**, its gilded Rococo interiors house galleries of miniature paintings, medallions and tribal artifacts. In the garden is a statue of Queen Victoria looking distinctly unamused.

Nehru Centre

Lalbagh Palace **Tel** (0731) 247 3264  Tue–Sun 

Environs

Dewas, 35 km (22 miles) northeast of Indore, was the setting for E.M. Forster’s book *The Hill of Devi* (1953).





The glittering interior of the Kanch Mandir in Indore



Sacred ghats on the Shipra river in Ujjain

Ujjain ⑭

Ujjain district: 56 km (35 miles) NW of Indore.  479,900.  

 MP Tourism, Railway Station, (0734) 396 9000.  Kumbh Mela (every 12 years), Shivratri (Feb/Mar).

On the banks of the Shipra river, Ujjain is one of India’s seven sacred cities, and one of the four sites of the Kumbh Mela (see p210). In the 4th–5th centuries AD it was the second capital of the Gupta Empire (see p43), with the celebrated Sanskrit poet Kalidasa as one of its leading lights. Its glory was, however, eclipsed in the 15th century after it was sacked by the Delhi Sultans (see p48).

The focal point of the town is the **Mahakaleshwar Temple** (an 18th-century reconstruction on the site of the original), with its much-venerated Shiva linga. In the main square is the **Gopal Temple** whose silver doors are believed to be from the

Somnath Temple in Gujarat, ransacked by Mahmud of Ghazni in the 11th century. A similar pair of doors are at the Golden Temple in Amritsar (see pp106–107). **Ram Ghat**, the largest of sacred ghats on the banks of the river, is the site of the Kumbh Mela (the next Ardh Kumbh here is due in 2010). On the opposite bank is the **Chintaman Ganesha Temple** whose carved pillars, dating to the 11th century, are the only relics of the original temple. At the southwestern edge of the city is the **Vedh Shala Observatory**. Built in 1730 by Sawaraj Singh II of Jaipur, the Mughal-appointed governor of Malwa, it is a smaller version of the one at Jaipur (see pp358–9).

Environs

The charming 15th-century **Kaliadeh Palace**, 8 km (5 miles) north of Ujjain, on an island in the Shipra, was ruled by the sultans of Malwa.




THE HILL OF DEVI

The famous British writer Edward Morgan Forster (1879–1970) spent several months in the princely state of Dewas as private secretary to its eccentric and charming maharaja. *The Hill of Devi*, based on his letters home, provides a delightful inside view of life at a provincial court with its festivities, intrigues and complicated protocol. Dewas is dominated by a hill with the temple of the goddess Chamunda Devi, hence the title of the book. Curiously, tiny Dewas was divided and ruled by two brothers, each with his own palace, army and anthem. Forster was at the court of the elder maharaja. The experience also provided Forster with material for his best-known novel, *A Passage to India* (1924).



Devi image in the temple at Dewas

Mandu 15

Dhar district 105 km (65 miles) W of Indore    Tourist Cottages, (07292, 26 3235)

Perched on a crest of the Vindhya Mountains is the deserted citadel of Mandu, one of India's most romantic and picturesque sites. Enclosed within its winding parapet walls, and surrounded by steep, wooded ravines, are palaces, mosques, lakes and pleasure pavilions, built between 1401 and 1529 by the sultans of Malwa (see p49), who referred to it as Shadhabad, the "City of Joy". Mandu is spread over a 23-sq km (9-sq mile) area, but its major monuments are clustered in two groups – the Royal Enclave and the Village Group.

Royal Enclave

 daily 15

Dominating the Royal Enclave are the **Jahaz Mahal** (see pp248–9), and the majestic T-shaped **Hindola Mahal** ("Swinging Palace"), whose massive inward-sloping walls give the impression that the building is swaying. Built in the late 15th century as the royal assembly hall, its austere façade is lightened by delicate tracery work on its arched windows. Next to it is a well, the **Champa Baoli**, connected to a series of subterranean rooms cooled



Detail from Hoshang Shah's tomb

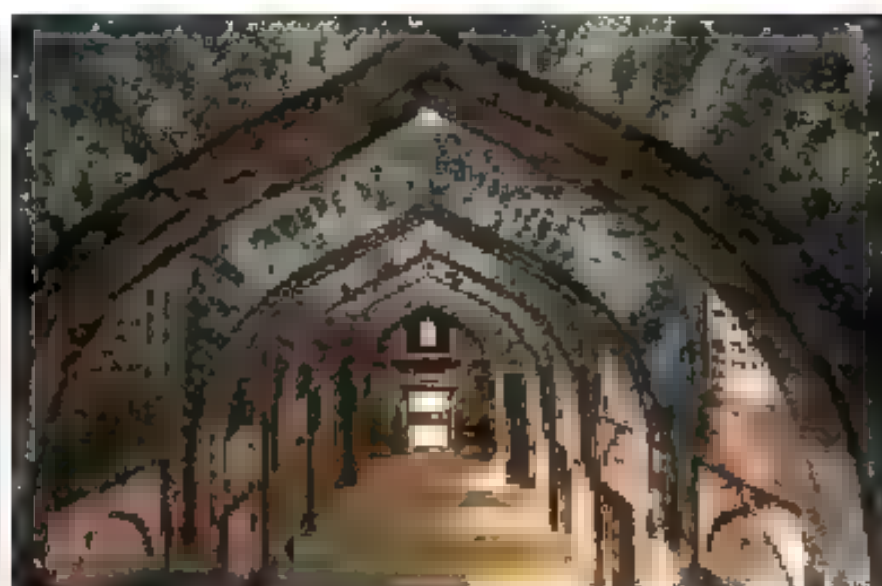
by flowing water, where the ladies of the harem spent hot summer days. To its east are **Gada Shah's House and Shop**, which belonged to an ambitious Rajput chieftain at the court of Mandu. The so-called "Shop" was actually an audience hall, while the house, a luxurious double-storeyed structure with water channels and fountains, still has traces of two fine paintings of the chieftain and his wife. The earliest of the monuments in the Royal Enclave is Dilawar Khan's Mosque, built by the first Malwa sultan in 1405 using the stones and pillars of Hindu and Jain temples that had stood here earlier.

Village Group

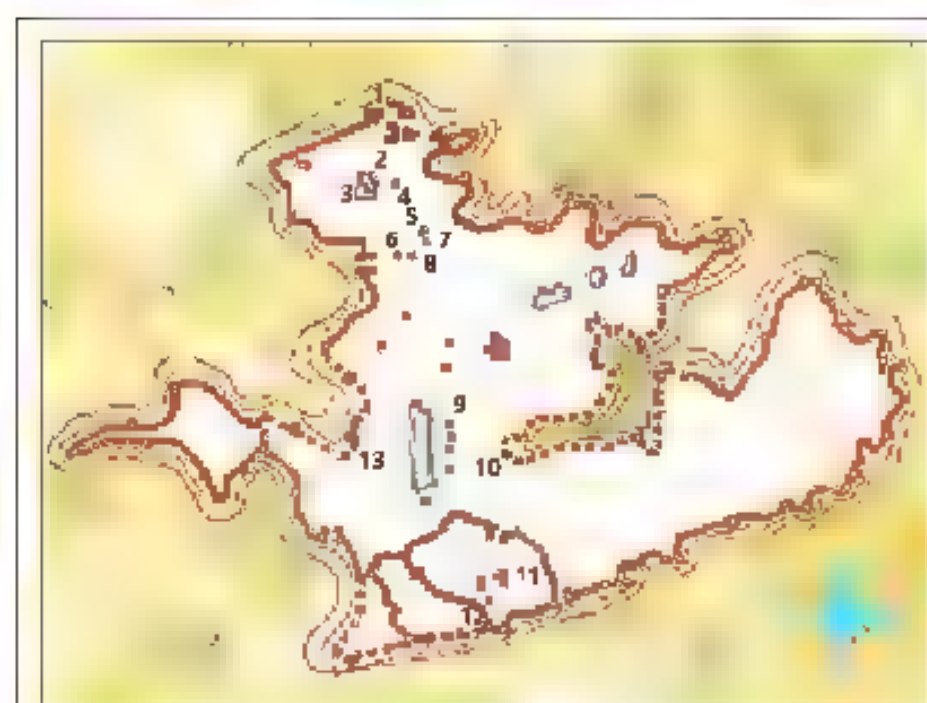
 daily

The first marble tomb to be built in India, **Hoshang**

Shah's Tomb (1410) is a perfectly proportioned structure where Malwa's most powerful sultan is buried. It has an inscription on the door recording the visit of four of Emperor Shah Jahan's architects in 1659. Opposite it is the magnificent **Jami Masjid** (built in 1454). It is said to have been inspired by the great Mosque at Damascus. Three large domes and 58 smaller ones surmount its colonnades and the *mihrab* is decorated with beautiful calligraphy. Next to it is the **Ashrafi Mahal madrasa** with the ruins of a seven-storeyed Victory Tower, acclaimed in contemporary accounts as Mandu's finest structure. It was built by Sultan Mahmud in 1443 to mark his battle with the maharana of Mewar. Interestingly, the latter also built a Victory Tower at Chittorgarh (see p402) after the same battle.



A row of lofty arches in the Hindola Mahal or Swinging Palace, Mandu



PLAN OF MANDU

- 1 Delhi Gate
- 2 Hindola Mahal
- 3 Champa Baoli
- 4 Gada Shah's House
- 5 Jahaz Mahal
- 6 Hoshang Shah's Tomb
- 7 Ashrafi Mahal
- 8 Jami Masjid
- 9 Malik Mu'izz's Mosque
- 10 Dilawar Khan's Mosque
- 11 Baz Bahadur's Palace
- 12 Rupmati's Pavilion
- 13 Neelkanth Mahal

0 metres 800

0 yards 800

Mandu: Jahaz Mahal



A pavilion window

The Jahaz Mahal ("Ship Palace") was built by the fifth sultan of Malwa Ghiyasuddin (r 1469–1500). Lying on a long, narrow strip of land between two of the many man-made lakes, Munja Talao and Kapar Talao, the palace gives the impression of an anchored ship, especially during the monsoon when the lakes are full.

This pleasure palace was staffed entirely by the hedonistic sultan's harem of 15,000 women, who also served as his bodyguard.



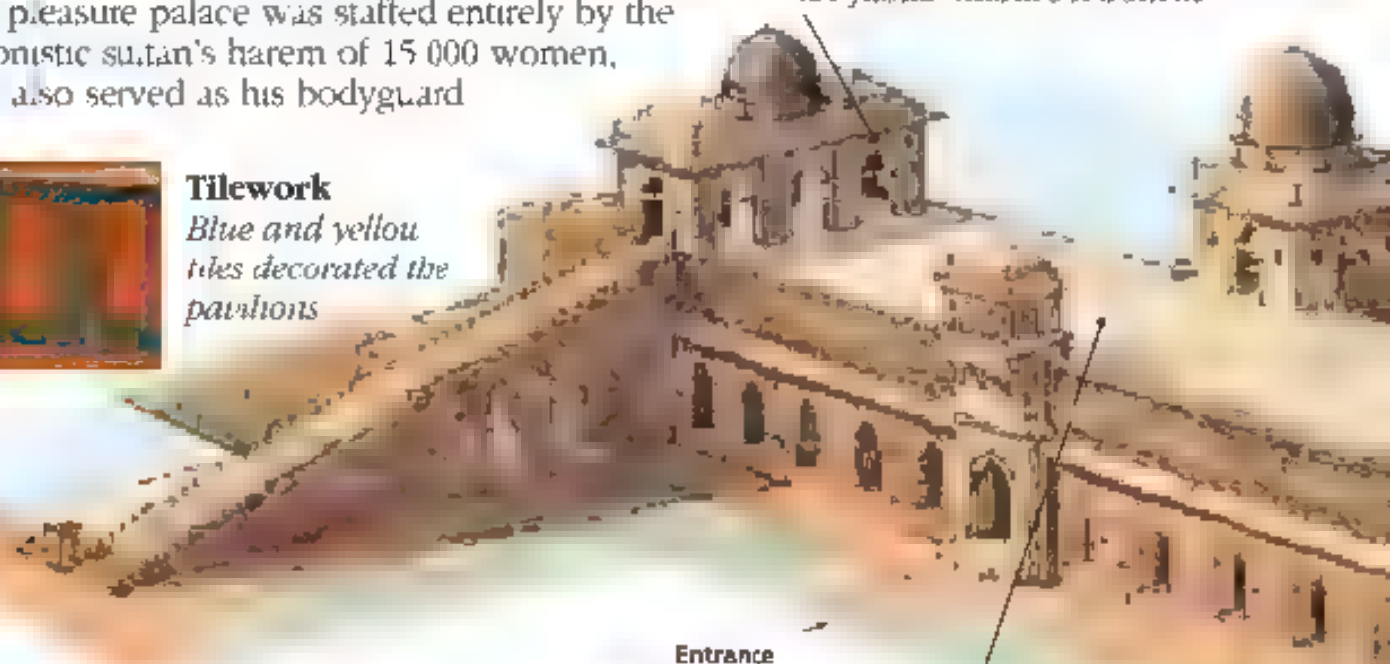
Tilework

Blue and yellow tiles decorated the pavilions



The Pavilions

The juxtaposition of conical and domed roofs over the pavilions adds great charm to the Jahaz Mahal's silhouette



Entrance



The Terrace

The most spacious part of the palace, the terrace, with its pavilions and kiosks, overlooks the lakes

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Water Channels
- ★ Bathing Pool

Exploring Mandu

Between the Village Group of monuments and Sagar Talao, Mandu's largest lake, are several monuments worth visiting. **Malik Mugith's Mosque**, built in 1432, has carved pillars taken from ruined Hindu temples. To its south are two impressive buildings in a pretty wooded area – **Dai ki Chhoti Bahen ka Mahal** (the "Nurse's Younger Sister's Palace") and **Dai ka Mahal** (the "Nurse's Palace"). The two women were clearly royal favourites and the pretty, octagonal-domed houses show traces of blue and yellow tilework.



Shivalinga at Neelkanth Mahal

Southeast of Sagar Talao, down a winding road to the edge of a cliff, are the Rewa Kund Group of Monuments, associated with the legendary romance between Sultan Baz Bahadur and the beautiful singer Rupmati. Beside the Rewa Kund Stepwell, fed by an underground stream whose waters are said to be sacred, is **Baz Bahadur's Palace**, constructed between 1508 and 1509. Its most charming feature is an octagonal pavilion overlooking a garden, now covered with weeds. Located just south of the palace is **Rupmati's Pavilion**, with its lovely

fluted domes, from where there is a spectacular view of the surrounding countryside. Baz Bahadur, the last sultan of Malwa, was defeated in battle by the Mughals in 1561. After this, Mandu fell into decline, as the Mughal emperors only used it as a halting place on their journeys to the Deccan. In 1616, Mandu briefly came to life again, when the Mughal emperor Jahangir spent seven months here, renovating the palaces and giving lavish parties at the Jahaz Mahal. Accompanying him was Sir Thomas Roe, the Elizabethan ambassador to the Mughal court. He has left a fascinating account of royal festivities and exciting lion and tiger hunts at Mandu.



★ Water Channels

The intricate spiral designs of the water channels are characteristic of the simple elegance of Mandu's architecture

The terrace pool, similar in design to the one on the ground floor, is fed by a water channel.

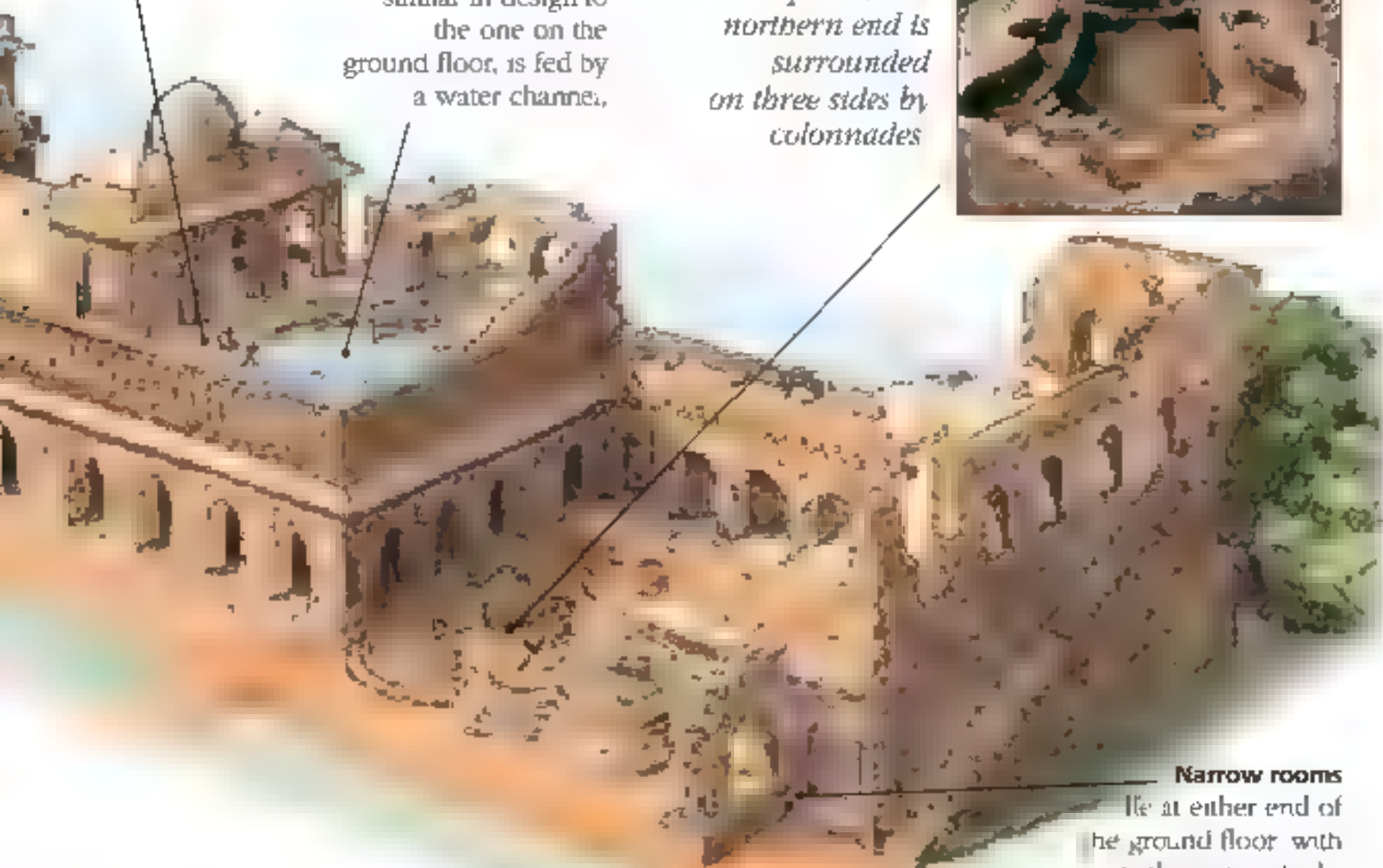
★ Bathing Pool

The beautiful pool at the northern end is surrounded on three sides by colonnades

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Royal Enclave ☐ daily ☒ 11

☒ Tourist cottages, Mandu,
(07292, 26 3235)



Narrow rooms
lie at either end of the ground floor with three large halls

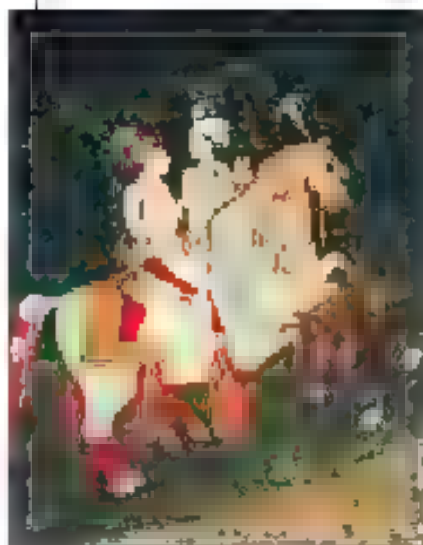
A short distance west of Sagar Talao, a flight of steps leads down a ravine to **Neelkanth Mahal**. This palace, with its many water channels and cascades, was built in 1574 on the site of an ancient Shiva shrine, for the Mughal emperor Akbar's Hindu wife. The main room, overlooking the valley, is once again in use as a Shiva temple, even though its walls are covered with fine Arabic calligraphy.

Environ

The **Bagh Caves**, lying 50 km (31 miles) west of Mandu, date from AD 400–700. Built by Buddhist monks, they have murals similar in style to those at Ajanta (see pp480–81) but unfortunately these are in a very poor state of preservation.

BAZ BAHADUR AND RUPMATI

One day while out hunting, Sultan Baz Bahadur (c.1554–61) spotted a Hindu girl, Rupmati, singing as she bathed in the Narmada river. Bewitched by her beauty and her voice,



An 18th-century miniature of Rupmati and Baz Bahadur

Baz Bahadur persuaded her to live with him in Mandu. Thereafter, he spent his time in the pursuit of love and music, leaving his kingdom vulnerable to attack. When Emperor Akbar's general Adham Khan, attacked Mandu in 1561, he won an easy victory. Baz Bahadur fled the battlefield, deserting Rupmati, who was captured. But the courtesan proved more courageous than the king. Even as the Mughal general waited outside her room to claim her, she committed suicide by swallowing poison.



View of Maheshwar's fort, shrines and ghats, along the Narmada

Maheshwar ⑩

West Nimar district 90 km (56 miles)
SW of Indore 19,600
Barwaha, 39 km (24 miles, E of town
centre, then taxi or bus MP
Tourism, Narmada Cottages, (07283,
27 3455 Panchkosi Yatra (Mar)

Picturesquely sited on the banks of the Narmada, Maheshwar is an important Hindu pilgrimage centre. It was the site of the ancient city of Mahishmati, mentioned in classical Sanskrit texts. Maheshwar's beautiful temples and ghats were erected by Queen Ahilyabai of the Holkar dynasty (see p246), in the mid-18th century.

The 1.5-km (1-mile) long river front is dotted with shrines, ghats and the elegant cenotaphs of the Holkar rulers, and is usually thronged with pilgrims taking a dip. A magnificent fan-shaped stairway leads from the river front to Maheshwar Fort's royal enclosure and the **Ahilyeshwar Temple**, built in 1798. The richly carved courtyard, leading on to the palace, has an impressive statue of Ahilyabai. This benevolent queen, who also built the Vishwanath Temple (see p205) in Varanasi, was described by a British colonial official, Sir John Malcolm, as "one of the purest and most exemplary rulers that ever lived". Also within the fort is the Renuka Weavers' Society, where the famous gossamer-fine Maheshwari cotton and silk textiles are woven.



Statue of Queen Ahilyabai

Omkareshwar ⑪

East Nimar district 77 km (48 miles)
S of Indore MP
Tourism, Tourist Bungalow, (07280,
27 1455 Shivratri (Feb/Mar)

The island of Omkareshwar, at the confluence of the Narmada and Kaveri rivers, is one of India's most enchanting pilgrimage towns. Seen from above, it is shaped like the sacred *Om* symbol. The island is 2-km (1.3-mile) long and 1-km (0.6-mile) wide, with jagged cliffs on its southern and eastern sides. It is dotted with temples, sadhus, caves and bathing ghats, and filled with the sound of chanting. A circumambulatory path circles the island, marking out the pilgrim trail.

Omkareshwar is linked to the mainland by a concrete causeway, though visitors can also come on the flat-bottomed barges that ply the river. The island is dominated by the towering white *shikhara* of the **Sri Omkar Mandhata** ("Bestower of Desires")

Temple, within which is a particularly sacred Shiva linga, one of 14 *pyotirlingas* (natural rock lingas said to have miraculously emerged from light) in the country.

At the eastern end of the island is the 10th-century **Siddhnath Temple**, which has beautiful sculptures of *apsaras*. The northern end has a cluster of Hindu and Jain temples. Overlooking them is a ruined palace, part of a fortified township that stood here until it was sacked by Muslim invaders in the 11th century.



A pilgrim praying on the banks of the Narmada at Omkareshwar

THE NARMADA DAM CONTROVERSY

Since the mid-1980s, an ambitious scheme to dam the Narmada has been embroiled in controversy. The Narmada Valley Authority claim that the Sardar Sarovar Dam will bring electricity, irrigation and drinking water to millions of people. Environmental activists opposing the dam, who include Medha Patkar, leader of the "Save the Narmada" movement



Anti-dam activists at a protest meeting

and Arundhati Roy, the 1997 Booker Prize-winning author, say that the dam will inundate some 37,000 ha (91,429 acres) of forest, and displace more than 200,000 villagers, most of them poor tribal people whose distinctive culture and means of livelihood will be wiped out along with their lands. The Supreme Court of India has now ruled that work on the dam can continue. When completed, it will be the second largest in the world, after the Three Gorges Dam in China.

The Narmada River

Rising in the Amarkantak Plateau where the Vindhya and Satpura ranges meet, the Narmada flows westward for 1,247 km (775 miles), across the states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat before entering the Arabian Sea. One of India's seven sacred rivers, the Narmada according to Hindu mythology was born of Lord Shiva's sweat when he

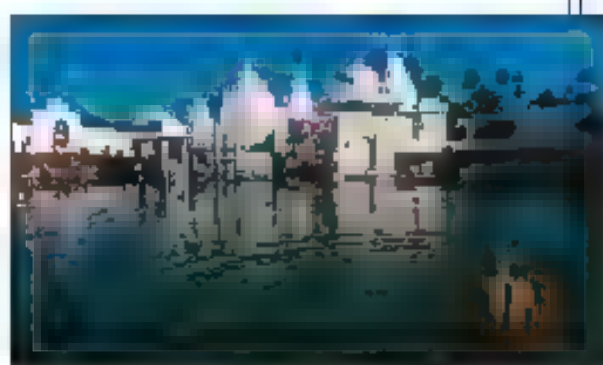


Image from Chausath Yogini Temple

performed his cosmic dance (see p566). The Narmada is also believed to be the embodiment of purity and a legend holds that every year the polluted Ganges comes in the guise of a dark woman, and takes a purifying dip in the Narmada. Sugarcane, cotton and bananas grow along the river whose banks are lined with temples.



Dhuandhar Falls are a scenic spot where the river drops 25 m (82 ft) down from the Amarkantak Plateau. The name Dhuandhar means Stream of Smoke.

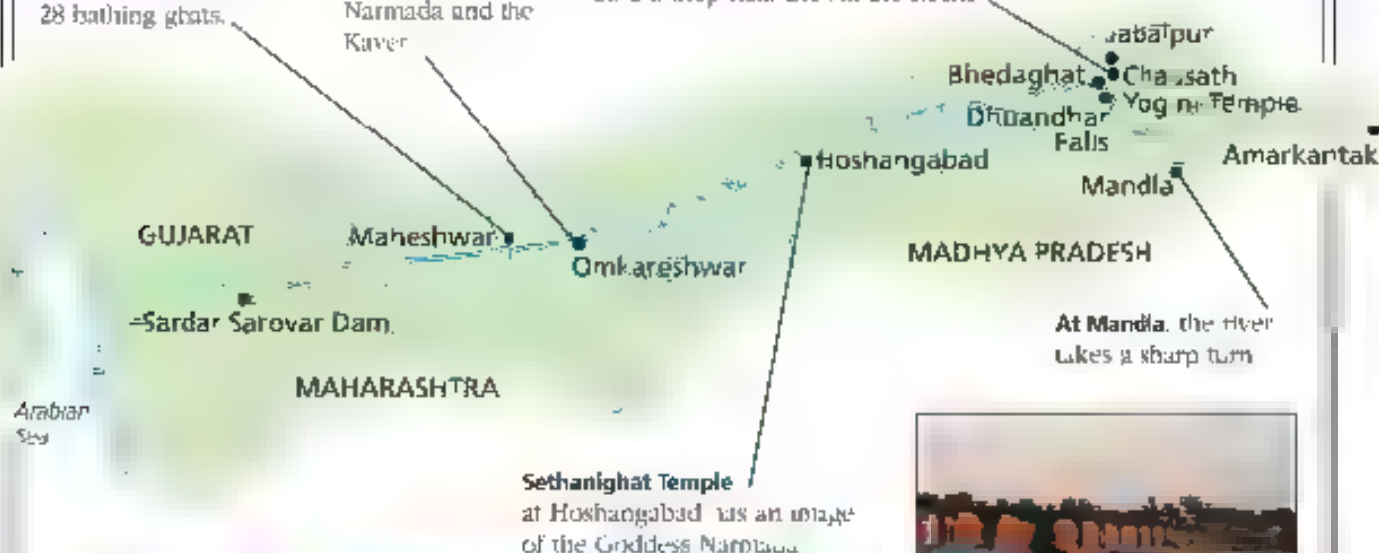


Narmada Kund at Amarkantak ("Neck of Shiva") marks the source of the river. It is surrounded by 16th-century temples.

Maheshwar has beautifully carved river front temples and 28 bathing ghats.

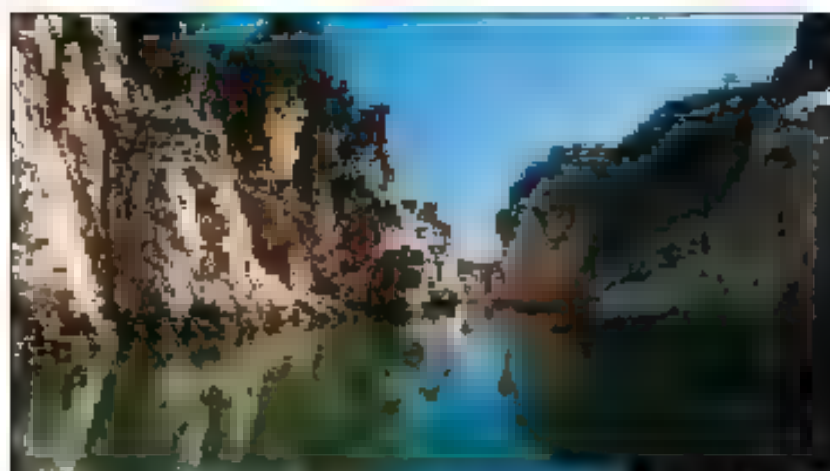
Omkareshwar is an Om-shaped island at the confluence of the Narmada and the Kaveri.

Chausath Yogini Temple which dates to the 10th century is on a hilltop near the Marble Rocks.

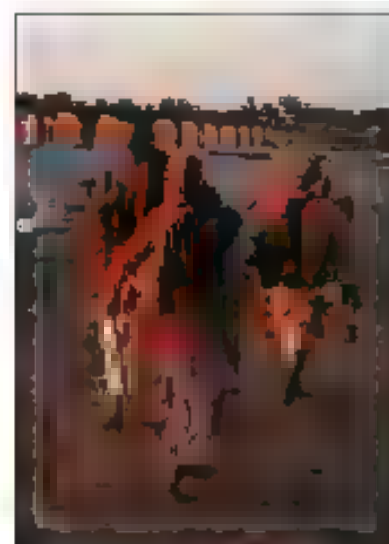


At Mandla, the river takes a sharp turn.

Sethanighat Temple at Hoshangabad is an image of the Goddess Narmada.



The Marble Rocks at Bhedaghat, where the fast flowing river has cut a gorge, are especially spectacular on a moonlit night. Boat rides are the best way to experience their beauty.



The Narmada Parikrama, undertaken by many sadhus, is a pilgrimage on foot along both banks of the river. It covers 2,600 km (1,616 miles) and takes about three years.



Pachmarhi's Christ Church, built in 1875, a relic of the Raj

Pachmarhi 18

Hoshangabad district, 210 km (130 miles) SE of Bhopal. 11,400 Piparia, 47 km (29 miles); at Pachmarhi, then taxi or bus. Pipariya, (07576, 22 3499. MP Tourism, Amaltas Complex Station, (07578) 25 2100 Shivratni (Feb/Mar)

This delightful hill station, at an altitude of 1,067 m (3,501 ft), lies in the verdant hills of the Satpura Range. Its attractions include waterfalls and pools, and caves with prehistoric art. In 1857, Captain James Forsyth of the Bengal Lancers spotted this saucer-shaped plateau, and it was quickly developed into a sanatorium and army station by the British.

The town retains a genteel, Raj-era ambience, and among its colonial relics are the **Christ Church**, built in 1875 with beautiful stained-glass windows, and the **Army Music School** which still begins the day with rousing English martial tunes such as the Colonel Bogey March.

Pachmarhi means "Five Houses", and the town takes its name from the five ancient **Pandava Caves**, set in a garden south of the bus stop. From the caves, paths lead to the scenic **Apsara Vihar** ("Fairy Pool") and the **Rajat Prapat Waterfalls**.

The wooded hills around Pachmarhi, home of the Gond and Korku tribes, are dotted with cave shelters, some of them with paintings dating back 10,000 years. The most

accessible of them is the **Mahadeo Cave**, 6 km (4 miles) from the Jar Stambh ("Victory Pillar") in the centre of town. The **Jatashankar Cave Temple**, dedicated to Shiva, is a short excursion, 2 km (1.3 mile) from the main bus stop. At the Shivratni festival, a colourful gathering of pilgrims and sadhus takes place here. En route to it is the **Harper's Cave**, so called because it has a painting of a man playing an instrument that looks like a harp.

Jabalpur 19

Jabalpur district, 330 km (205 miles) E of Bhopal. 951,500. 14 km (8 miles) W of town centre. MP Tourism, Railway Station, (0761, 267 7690)

The gateway to Bandhavgarh (see p239) and Kanha (see pp254–5), two of India's finest wildlife sanctuaries, Jabalpur was from the 12th to 16th centuries the capital of a powerful Gond tribal kingdom, whose most famous ruler was a brave and able woman, Rani Durgavati. In 1817 the British made it an army cantonment and administrative centre to deal with the growing menace of gangs of highway bandits known as *thuggees*, who would rob travellers. In the 1830s, Colonel William Sleeman launched his famous campaign against the *thuggees*, and in a few years

had wiped them out. The word *thug* (from *thuggee*) though, seems to have found a permanent place in the English language. In the bazaar is the **Rani Durgavati Museum** with stone sculptures and Gond tribal artifacts. The ruined **Madan Mahal Fort**, built by a Gond king in 1116, overlooks the town from a hill to the west.

Rani Durgavati Museum
 Mon–Sat

Environs

The **Marble Rocks**, the **Chausath Yogini Temple** and the **Dhuandhar Falls** are 22 km (14 miles) southwest of Jabalpur.

Mandla 20

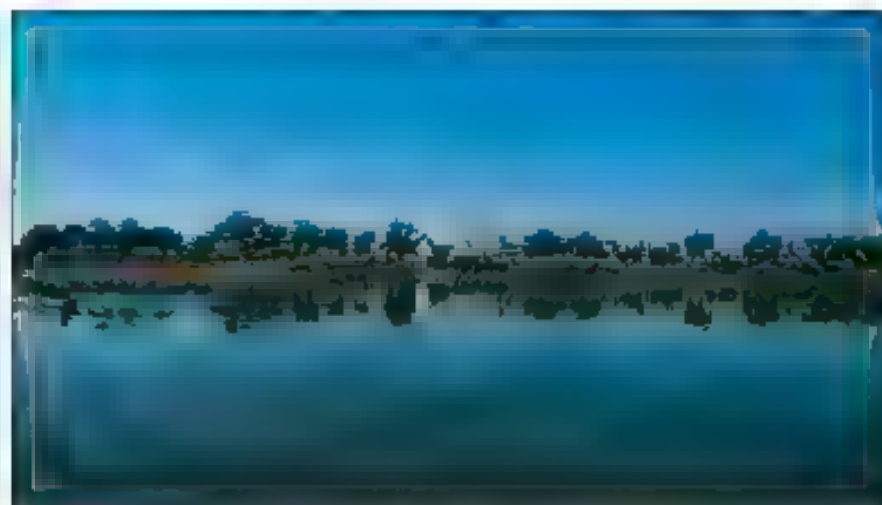
Mandla district, 95 km (59 miles) S of Jabalpur. daily

This sleepy town is situated on a loop in the Narmada river, which provides a natural moat for the 17th-century Gond Fort, now in ruins. Mandla is a sacred city for

Gond tribals, whose warrior queen Durgavati committed suicide here in 1564 when she was defeated by the Mughal emperor Akbar's army. Temples and ghats line the banks of the river, where the Gonds perform their funeral rites. The main bazaar near the bus stand, is interesting to explore with its shops selling tribal silver jewellery and bell metal.



Detail from a Gond tribal house



The Narmada river at Mandla, lined by temples and ghats

The Folk Art of Bastar

Bastar district, in the newly-created state of Chhattisgarh is a remote, thickly forested area predominantly inhabited by tribal people and small communities of craftsmen. They live close to nature and their arts and crafts have been inspired by the beauty, rhythm and vigour of forest creatures



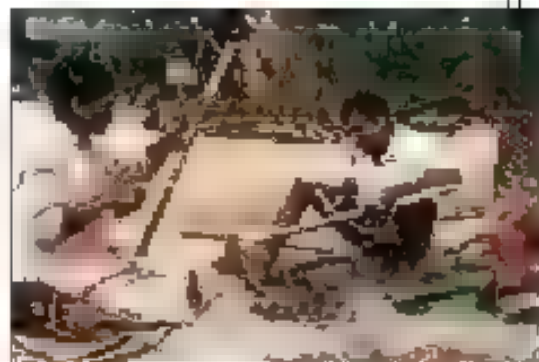
Clay toy on wheels

Animal, bird and plant motifs embellish many of the utilitarian, decorative and ritual objects that they fashion out of clay, wood, metal and cotton yarn. These can be seen at the weekly tribal markets held in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, as well as in handicrafts shops in Delhi.

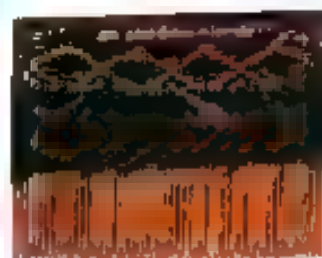


A newly-wed tribal couple in Bastar

Wooden walking sticks, toys and ritual objects are carved out of the soft wood of roots and stems. The ingenious walking sticks make an eerie whistling sound, meant to scare away wild animals and evil spirits in the forest.



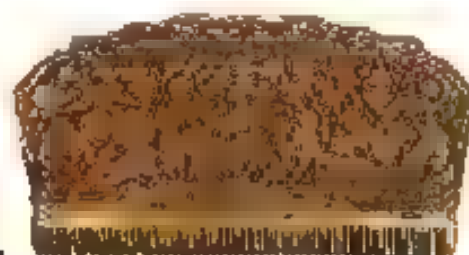
Combs in wood and metal are exchanged between young tribal boys and girls of Bastar as tokens of love. The wooden combs are decorated with simple geometric motifs, while the brass ones are more ornately carved.



Iron lamps, embellished with leaf forms and tiny animal and bird figures, are a speciality of Bastar's *ghars* (blacksmiths), who also make agricultural tools.



Tribal potters make fascinating clay ritual figures of mythical animals: horses and elephants. The materials used are the red and black clay from river banks, known for their strength and elasticity.



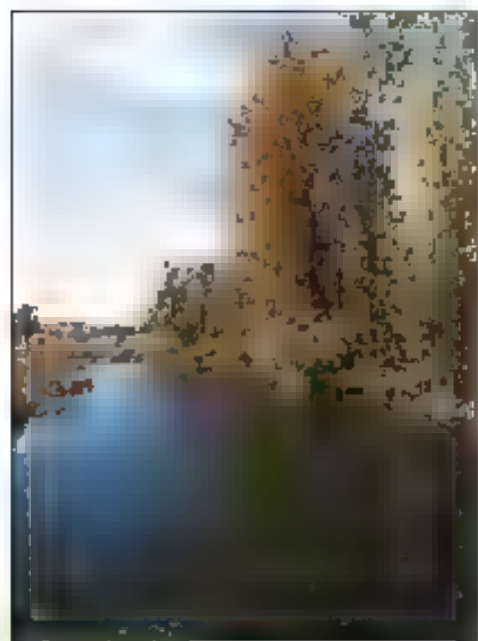
A brass comb, carved with the image of a deity



Bronze images, made by the *Ghara* community of metalsmiths, using the lost wax technique, include this guardian deity of a Bastar village.



Textiles for festive occasions are woven from thick unbleached cotton by the *Panka* community of weavers. The motifs, always inspired by nature, are woven in red madder-dyed yarn.



Shrivanttal

This tranquil waterhole attracts several water birds, such as the lesser whistling teal and the shoveller. There are viewing platforms located nearby.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Mandla district 196 km (122 miles) SE of Jabalpur to Khatia and Kisli, the main entry points

MP Tourism, Kisli, (07649) 27 7227; Bhopal, (07649) 27 7242

Other entry points: Mukki

Oct–Jun. extra charges

guides are compulsory

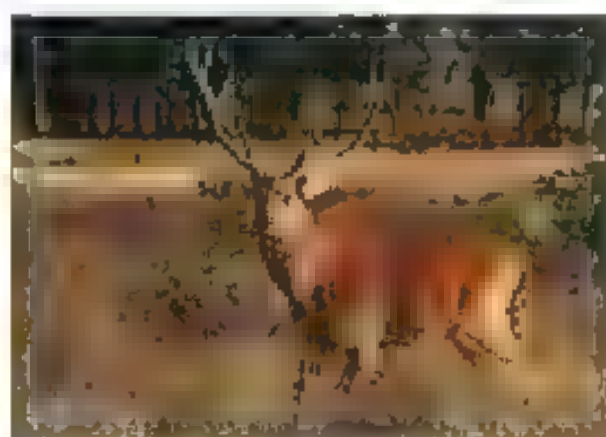
from Kisli, Jeep safaris available

visitors cannot walk in the park



Tiger

Kanha's tigers now number about 100. Park guides expertly track them through pug marks and the alarm calls of deer and langurs.



Central Indian Barasingha

Conservation has increased the numbers of this rare species, which was close to extinction 30 years ago.



KEY

Park boundary

Major road

Major road

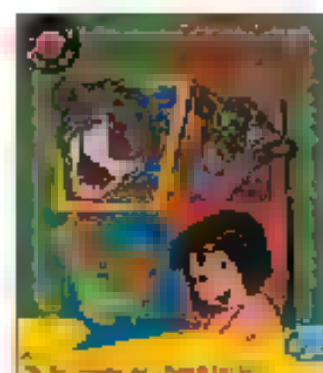
Tourist information

Viewpoint

Accommodation

KIPLING'S JUNGLE BOOK

The English writer Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) was born in Bombay (Mumbai), and though he spent little time in India, the country provided the setting for many of his books. Among his most enduring works is *The Jungle Books*, delightful stories of animal behaviour and the law of the jungle. Set in the Seonee Forests of Kanha, their endearing hero is the wolf-reared boy Mowgli, and the many enchanting animal characters include Ricki-tikki-tavi, the mongoose; Shere Khan, the tiger; Kaa, the python; and Baloo, the bear.



Jacket for Disney's version of *The Jungle Books*





EASTERN INDIA



INTRODUCING EASTERN INDIA 258-265

KOLKATA 266-283

WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM 284-303

ORISSA 304-321

ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST 322-339

Introducing Eastern India

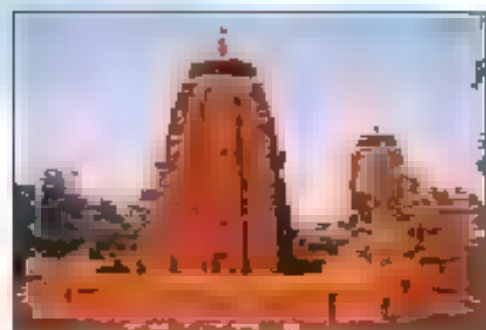
Kolkata, India's second largest city, is the best known destination for visitors to Eastern India. Apart from this endlessly fascinating metropolis, the region offers an astonishing diversity of landscapes, peoples and cultures. These include the steamy mangrove forests along the Bay of Bengal, habitat of the Royal Bengal tiger, the spectacular mountain vistas of Darjeeling (officially Darjiling) and Sikkim, and Orissa's magnificent temples and beaches. Further east are Assam and the northeastern states, home to many different tribal communities whose distinct cultures flourish in areas of pristine natural beauty.



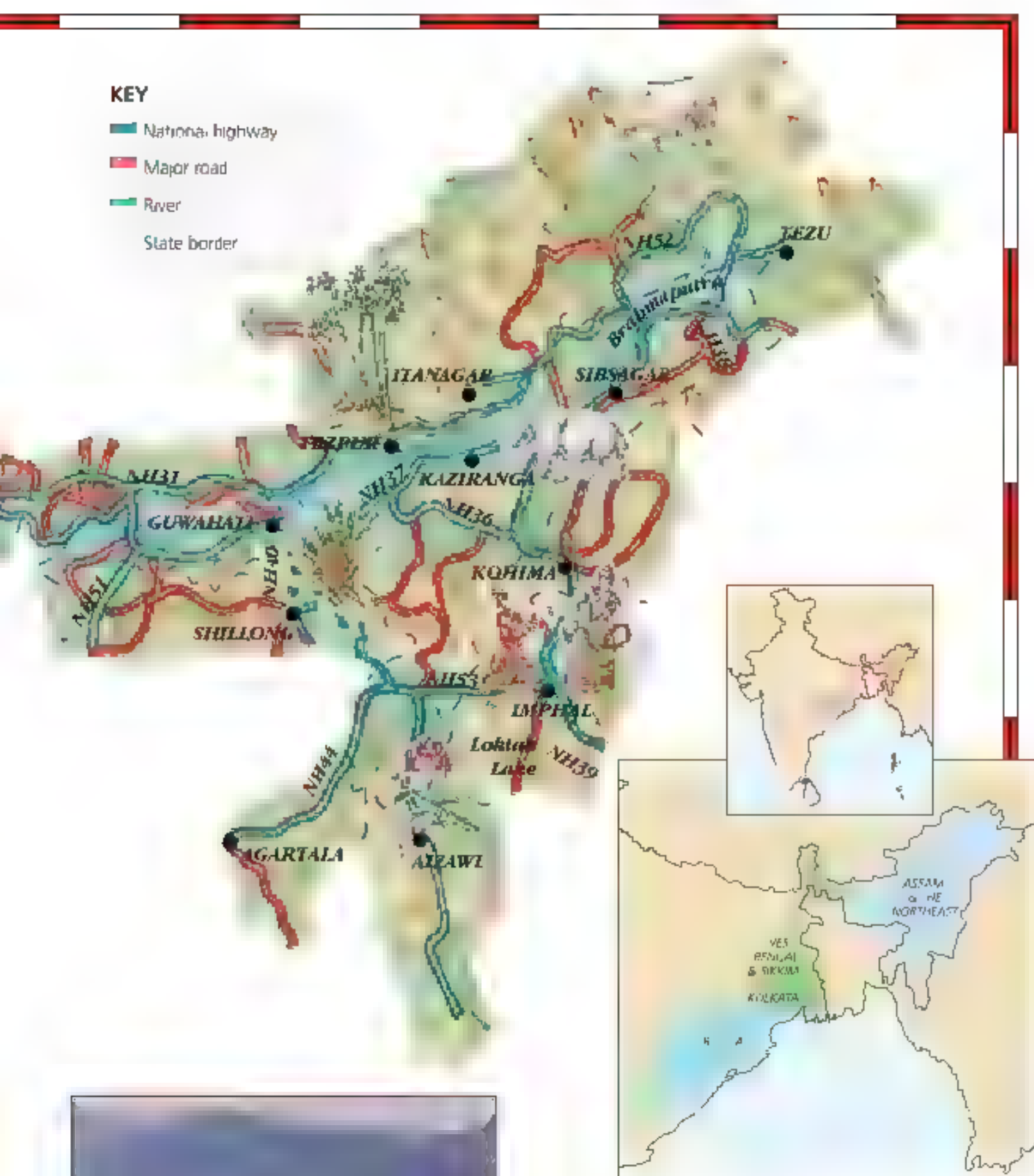
An agile Nishi tribesman of Arunachal Pradesh crossing the Siang, a tributary of the Brahmaputra river, on a tightrope

SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* pp699-702
- *Where to Eat* pp727-4



The 10th-century Mukteshwar Temple complex in Bhubaneswar



Tea gardens in Darjeeling, nestling in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas

GETTING AROUND

Kolkata, Guwahati and Bhubaneswar, the three major cities in this region, are well connected by air and rail to most parts of India. From Kolkata and Guwahati, there are regular flights to all the northeastern states. The hill station of Darjeeling, and Sikkim's capital, Gangtok, are accessible by air or rail up to Bagdogra-Siliguri, from where buses and taxis complete the journey up to the hills on National Highway 31. The delightful Himalayan Toy Train (see p294) also runs from Siliguri to Darjeeling, providing panoramic views of the Himalayas en route. From Kolkata, most destinations in West Bengal are reached on National Highway 34. In Orissa, the major sights are connected by National Highway 5. The gateway to the northeast, Guwahati in Assam, has good road links to the other six states on National Highways 37, 40 and 52. Visitors require travel permits for some destinations in the northeast (see p758).

A PORTRAIT OF EASTERN INDIA

The peoples and cultures found in India's eastern states are as varied as the landscape itself. Stretching from the crowded metropolis of Kolkata to the remote tribal settlements of Arunachal Pradesh, which border on China and Myanmar, the region includes mountainous Sikkim, tropical Orissa, and the lush valleys of Assam, watered by the mighty Brahmaputra river.

West Bengal, the largest and most densely populated of the eastern states, offers the visitor a kaleidoscope of images. These range from the mangrove swamps of the Sunderbans, home of the Royal Bengal tiger, to the misty tea gardens of Darjeeling, and the unique vitality of the state capital Kolkata (formerly Calcutta).

Kolkata is a city that evokes extreme reactions: novelists exhaust metaphors trying to describe it, filmmakers are defeated by it, and even the average non-Bengali agrees that something about the city defines that abstract entity – "culture". As a headquarter of the East India Company, and later, the capital of British India, the city played an early host to crucial Western



Orchid from Meghalaya

influences, especially English education. It witnessed the phenomenon popularly described as the Bengal Renaissance, a complex dynamic of socio-religious reform, and literary and artistic efflorescence, with a strong nationalistic undercurrent. Kolkata thus became the first Indian city to have an "intelligentsia". Rabindranath Tagore (see p292), its most famous son, lives on through his stories, poems, plays and songs loved to this day. Another cultural icon is the famous film director Satyajit Ray, whose work has had a profound impact on Asian art cinema. Since 1977, West Bengal has been under Communist rule. The culture of flag-waving processions, however, blends flawlessly with the



A village pond in Orissa, with a small Hindu temple on its banks



Statues being transported during Durga Puja, Kolkata's biggest festival

typical Kolkata pastime of *aada* – a lively mix of heated political debate, highbrow analyses and lowbrow gossip. This is all played out against a backdrop of crumbling vestiges of some splendid colonial architecture.

From Kolkata, many visitors travel south to the beaches and exquisitely sculpted temples of Orissa. The high-point of Orissa's cultural and religious year is the spectacular annual Rath Yatra, a festival held in the temple town of Puri (*see p312*). The state pays a price for its scenic location on the Bay of Bengal – it is often hit by devastating cyclones during the monsoon. In recent years, however, Orissa's people, who include many forest-dwelling tribal groups, have enjoyed increasing prosperity, with schemes to develop the state's rich mineral resources and its growing tourism industry.

North of Kolkata lies Sikkim, its skyline dominated by the snow-capped peaks of India's highest mountain, Kanchendzonga (*see p302*), which soars to a height of 8,598 m (28,209 ft). Sikkim's culture borrows much from neighbouring Tibet and Nepal, and many people practice the Tibetan form of Buddhism, introduced in the 15th century by its former rulers, the Chhogyals, who came from Tibet. Much of Sikkim's cultural and religious

life still revolves around its serene and beautiful Buddhist monasteries.

In the extreme eastern corner of India are Assam and the six northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, connected to the rest of the country

only by a thin corridor of land. This region is home to dozens of tribal communities, each with its own language and culture (*see pp336–7*).

Tea dominates the economy of Assam, which produces more than half the tea grown in India, as well as much of the country's oil. The other six states have rich agricultural and forest resources, and little industry. The isolation of the northeastern states, and their shared borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar, has led to violent separatist movements in some areas. Visitors need special permits (*see p759*) for this region whose main attraction is its pristine natural beauty and rare flora and fauna.



Dancer at monastery festival, Sikkim



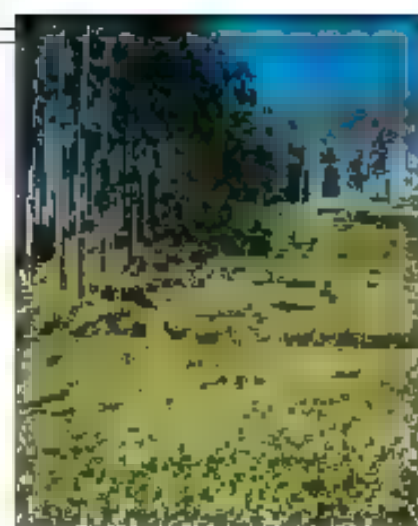
An Assamese woman pounding grain

The Story of Indian Tea



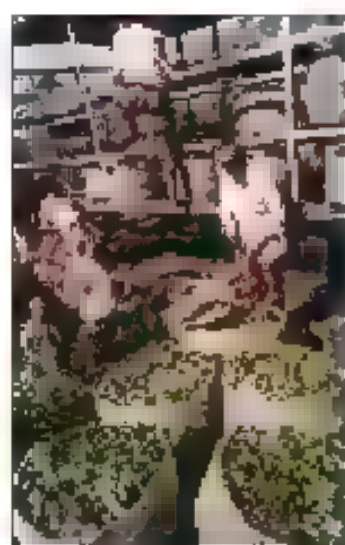
Tea leaves

India is the world's largest producer of tea, perhaps the world's most popular drink. The tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) is indigenous to Northeast India, and though tea was cultivated and drunk for centuries by the Singpho tribe of Arunachal Pradesh as a stimulant and medicinal brew, tea plantations for commercial exploitation were only established in the mid-19th century. Today, the Indian tea industry employs over a million people, half of whom are women, and produces about 850 million kg (1.874 million lb) of tea every year, most of which is grown in Assam, northern Bengal and Darjeeling (Darjiling).



Darjeeling's tea gardens are a picturesque sight, covering terraced hill slopes up to an altitude of 1,950 m (6,398 ft).

Fresh tea leaves are plucked from April to December. A skilled picker can harvest 37 kg (82 lbs) of leaves a day, enough to yield 20 kg (44 lbs) of processed tea.



Shade trees



The **withering process** blows warm air over the leaves, reducing their moisture content by half. The leaves are then rolled, pressed, fermented, and finally dried again.

Fresh tea leaves

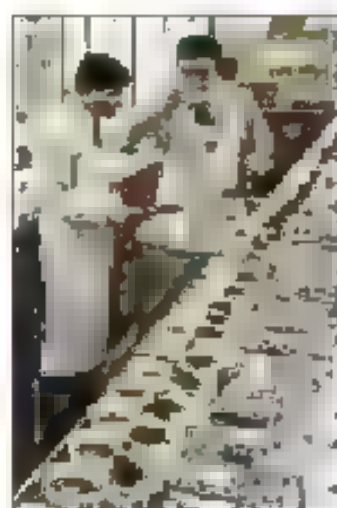
Dried tea leaves



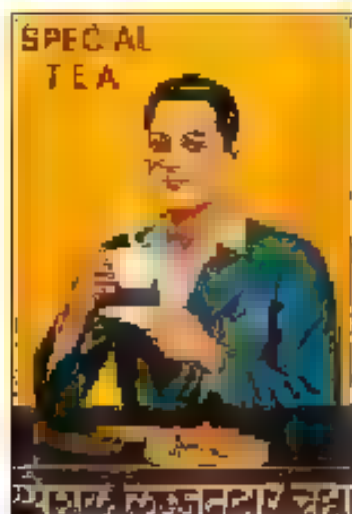
The **CTC or crush, tear and curl method**, is used to process a more robust, granular Assam tea. The leaves are crushed to release their enzymes, before they are fermented and dried.

PICKERS IN A TEA GARDEN

The tea bush, with its bright green oval leaves, is regularly pruned to keep its height low, allowing for convenient picking. Left wild, the plant can grow into a tree up to 10 m (33 ft) tall.



Tea tasters tell the quality of a tea by breathing on to leaves clutched in their fist and inhaling the warmed aroma. To fix the base price at auctions, they also sample the brew, swirling the liquid round their tongues, in the manner of wine tasters.



A 1950s poster advertising a brand of Indian tea

Women's supple fingers are preferred for the delicate task of plucking just the top two leaves



Tea bush

Basket for carrying plucked tea leaves



Darjeeling and Assam teas are the best known Indian varieties. *Darjeeling teas* are famous for their delicate muscadel flavour, and the best ones have been sold at auction for up to US\$220 for 1 kg (2.2 lbs). *Assam tea* has a stronger taste and darker colour.



Darjeeling tea logo



Assam tea logo



Bronze tea kettles with dragon-shaped handles and elephant trunk spouts, are typical of the Darjeeling and Sikkim region.



Different types of Indian tea include green (unfermented) tea which is drunk in Kashmir and masala tea spiced with cardamom and ginger. Long leaves give a superior brew, while broken leaves and tea dust go into tea bags.

TEA ESTATES

In the early 19th century, the British began looking for a site in India, suitable for growing tea for the British market. They soon discovered wild tea plants growing in the northeast, and by 1850, vast tracts of tiger-populated jungle had been cleared in Assam, northern Bengal and Darjeeling to establish tea gardens. Today India has over 25,000 tea estates of varying size, each a self-contained world with its own school, shops and medical clinic. At its heart is the plantation manager's gracious bungalow, and a club where the planters used to meet for tennis and sundowners.



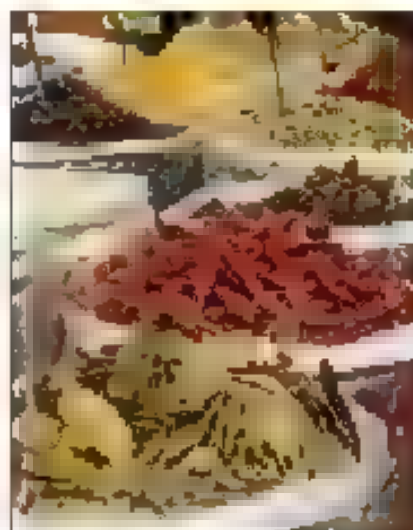
A typical tea planter's bungalow in northern Bengal

The Flavours of Eastern India

This region, watered by the rivers of the Gangetic Delta and washed by the sea, is a land of plenty with an abundance of fresh vegetables, coconut and fish. Rice is the staple food and the region produces a wide variety. Freshwater fish is popular all across this riverine land. Pork and beef are eaten in most of the Northeastern states, while in Sikkim, the food is largely Tibetan with bamboo shoots and steamed dishes featuring on the menu. This region, with its large tea estates in the Himalayan foothills, is also the home of India's finest teas – especially from Darjeeling.



Green chillies and lime



Bay leaves, chillies and other spices on sale at a weekly market

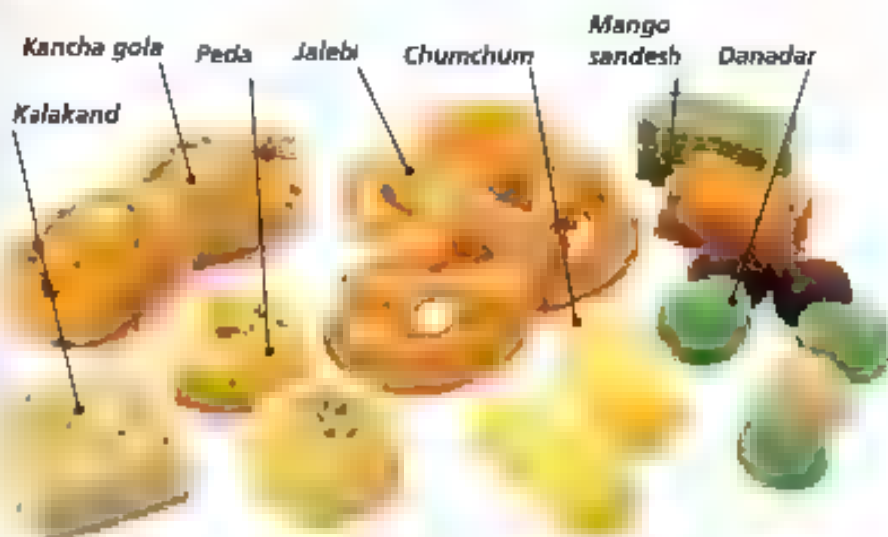
BASIC DISHES

In the delta and coastal areas of Bengal and Orissa, five spices – mustard, aniseed, fenugreek, cumin and black cumin seeds – are used to flavour the food while mustard oil is the preferred cooking fat. The two cuisines are similar, except that the Bengalis pride themselves on having a more sophisticated

palate. *Dalma* is Orissa's signature dish and is a combination of vegetables and *arhar dal* (red gram). Vegetables, such as potatoes and aubergines (eggplant), are fried (*bhaja*), mashed (*bharta*) and lightly or heavily spiced as in *dalma*, made with peas and cauliflower. Classic dishes include *shukto* (mixed vegetables with bitter gourd) and *mochar ghonto*, made from the banana flower

FISH AND SEAFOOD

It is fish that brings out the genius of cooking in this region. Every part is eaten – the head makes a delicious curry (*muri ghonto*) and the roe an excellent cocktail snack (*macher dimer hora*). Popular fish of the region are *rahu* (carp), *betki* and the much-loved *hilsa* or *ilish* fish which floods the rivers during the monsoon. *Hilsa* is



A small selection of the many varieties of sweets from Bengal

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

This region's cuisine is varied. Historically Calcutta (now Kolkata) has been a melting pot and the traditional Bangla *rana*, which combines the Bengali fish-based, delicately spiced food,

the Muslim mutton dishes and the many layered Dacca *parantha*, was enriched by the flavours of its Jewish, Armenian,

Indo-Portuguese and English settlers. Fish is the centrepiece of both the Bengali and Oriya meal, and can be cooked with vegetables, as in *besar maacch*. Often,

dried prawns are added to vegetables to enhance the flavour. Rice, a *dal* (lentils), vegetable preparations, sweet and sour chutneys, green chillies and slices of lime accompany the meal. In the Northeast, pork is a favourite. It is cooked with bamboo shoots, wild mushrooms or with ground rice and herbs in a one-pot dish called *onla*.



Momos, Tibetan dumplings, are eaten with a fiery sauce of dried red chillies and a bowl of chicken broth

Tomato chutney



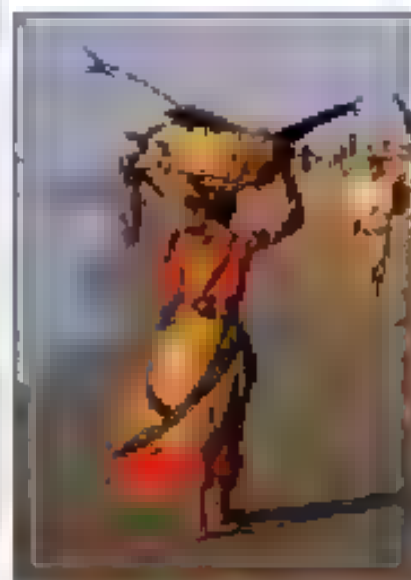
Women working in paddy fields in Orissa

cooked in mustard, fried crisp, smoked to melt its innumerable bones, steamed in a banana leaf (*tish macher paturi*) or cooked in a light sauce of yoghurt and ginger (*daa maachh*). Other great regional inventions are the delicate *daab chingri*, where prawns are cooked in a tender coconut (*daab*) and *chingri malai* curry (prawns cooked in coconut milk).

OTHER FAVOURITES

Sikkim's distinctive cuisine is influenced also by Nepal and Bhutan. Some popular dishes are the Tibetan-style *thupka* (thick noodle soup), *momos* and the diverse ways of cooking local cottage cheese (*churpi*). Assamese food combines pungent ingredients with fermented foods, such as the Manipuri

tromba, made with fermented fish, vegetables and bamboo shoots. Other dishes include *aksht aong* (a delicious pork curry heavily seasoned with chilies) and *arak pongnem* (steamed fish from Nagaland).



Basket of freshly caught fish being carried to the market

In Kolkata, food from the Raj still reigns supreme among other cuisines. Typical dishes are prawn cocktail, roast lamb with mint sauce and the ever-popular caramel custard.

SWEETS

Both Orissa and Bengal are known for their infinite variety of milk-based sweets. *Sandesh*, made from *chenna* (an Indian ricotta), is by far the most popular. Cottage cheese and syrup are also used to create many varieties of sweets including *kancha gola*, *chumchum* and *danadar*. *Peda* and *kalakand* are made with condensed milk and chopped nuts.

ON THE MENU

Bhapa hilsa *Hilsa* marinated with mustard and chilies and steamed in a banana leaf.

Chholar dal Yellow split peas seasoned with cumin seeds and *garam masala*.

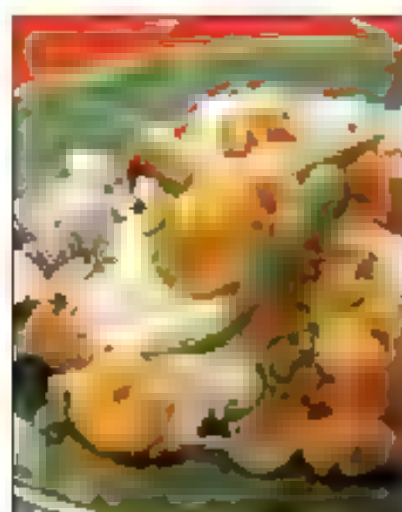
Kamla kheer A pudding with oranges and thickened milk.

Kosha mangsho A spicy mutton curry eaten with rice or fluffy fried breads (*tuchka*).

Mishti doi Yoghurt sweetened with molasses and garnished with chopped nuts.

Saag bhaja Stir-fried spinach, garnished with coconut.

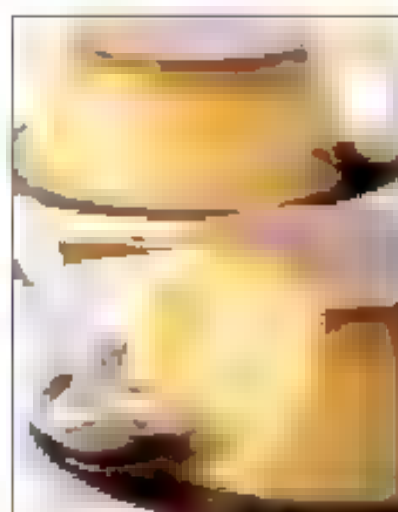
Shoshey maachh Fish cooked in a mustard sauce.



Prawn malai curry has prawns cooked in coconut cream with crushed mustard seeds and red chillies.



Aloo posto, common to both Bengal and Orissa, are potatoes cooked with a paste of poppy seeds.



Caramel custard, a Raj favourite, is a milk mixture baked in a dish with sweet caramel lining its base.



KOLKATA

One of the world's great cities, Kolkata or Calcutta as it used to be known, has been through many incarnations. From an obscure village on the banks of the Hooghly river, it evolved into the capital of Great Britain's Indian empire. Today, this vibrant city with its distinct imperial flavour is the capital of the communist state of West Bengal.

In 1690, an English merchant, Job Charnock, established a trading post in the riverside village of Sutanuti which, together with neighbouring Govindapur and Kolikata, grew into the city of Calcutta. Over the next 200 years, the city became a flourishing commercial centre with imposing Victorian Gothic buildings, churches, and boulevards. Simultaneously, intellectual and cultural life bloomed, with a renaissance of Bengali art and literature, and the growth of a strong nationalist reform movement that led to the founding of the Brahmo Samaj, an enlightened off-shoot of Hinduism, and the establishment of Presidency College, then the foremost centre of English education. The decision to shift the capital to New Delhi in 1911 and the urban decay of the 1960s diminished some of the city's affluence, but never quenched its effervescence.

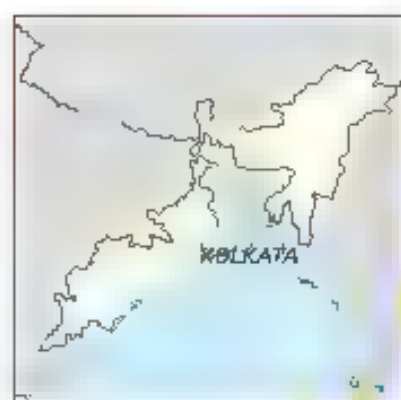
In 2001 Calcutta became Kolkata, the Bengali pronunciation of its name. The city is crowded and dirty in places, but is nevertheless full of character. The teeming life of the waterfront along the Strand, the noisy jumble of bazaars and pavement stalls, the residential streets with their once gracious mansions, all make for an electric, cosmopolitan atmosphere, rarely found in other Indian cities. Kolkata's charms straddle the decaying grandeur of the imperial capital and the smart restaurants and boutiques of Park Street. These coexist with the traditional Bengal world of Rabindranath Tagore's mansion at Jorasanko, the Kalighat temple and the potters' village of Kumartuli, and with the lively politics of the Coffee House and the Maidan, dominated by the Victoria Memorial, a spectacular symbol of imperial high noon.



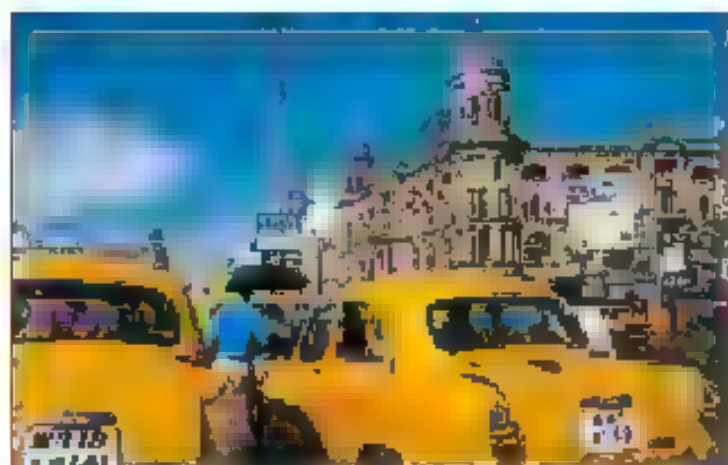
View of the Hooghly river and the Howrah Bridge, the third longest cantilever bridge in the world

Exploring Kolkata

The city of Kolkata lies in a long strip, with the river to its west and the wetlands to its east. Along the river front, the Strand, is the city centre with the Maidan, a large 400-ha (988-acre) park where Kolkata's residents play football, hold political rallies or enjoy the cool evenings. On the other side of the park is the city's main thoroughfare, the Chowringhee or Jawaharlal Nehru Road with shops, hotels, offices and residential buildings. The southern part of the city has the middle-class residential areas, while north Kolkata is the older part of the city, its maze of narrow lanes crowded with houses cheek-by-jowl with shops and offices.



LOCATOR MAP



A street scene at New Market with Kolkata's distinctive taxis

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Historic Buildings, Areas & Neighbourhoods

- Alipore ①
- Around BBD Bagh pp270-71 ②
- Chowringhee ③
- College Street ④
- Jorasanko ⑤
- Kumartuli ⑥
- Marble Palace ⑦
- Maidan ⑧
- Mother House ⑨
- Nilhat House ⑩
- Nirmal Hridaya ⑪
- Park Street Cemetery ⑫
- Tangra ⑬

Museums

- Indian Museum pp276-7 ⑭
- Victoria Memorial pp274-5 ⑮

Churches, Temples & Mosques

- Armenian Church of St Nazareth ⑯
- Nakhoda Mosque ⑰
- Kargil ⑱
- St John's Church ⑲

Parks & Gardens

- Botanical Gardens ⑳



GETTING AROUND

Central Kolkata is compact and can easily be covered on foot. Alternatives include taxis, or the often crowded buses and mini-buses. Trams and the Metro, linking the southern and northern parts of the city from Tollygunge to Dum Dum, are other options. A local mode of transport are cycle-rickshaws that operate in the congested lanes and side streets.



A colourful stall in one of Kolkata's main flower markets

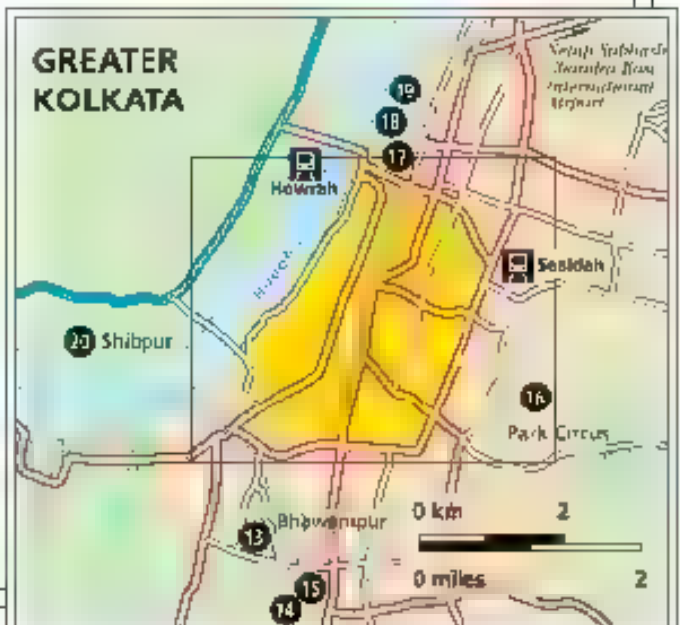
KEY

- Street-by-Street area: see pp270-71
- Railway station
- Bus station
- Ferry port
- Metro station
- Tourist information
- Hospital
- Police station
- Temple
- Gurdwara
- Church
- Post office
- National highway
- Major road
- Minor road

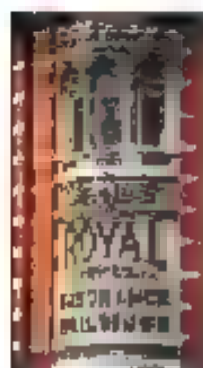
SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* pp69-70
- *Where to Eat* pp72-8

GREATER KOLKATA

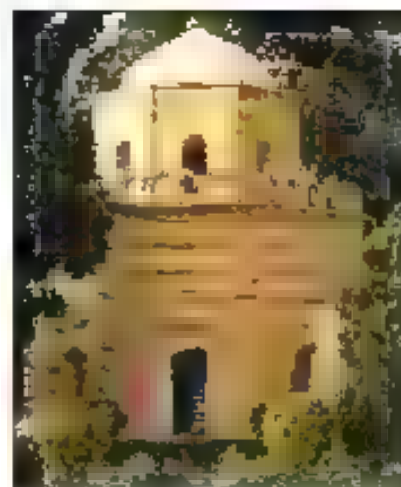


Street-by-Street: Around BBD Bagh ●



Signage of the
Royal Insurance
Building

This is the "heart" of Kolkata and was the site of the original Kolkata – one of the villages from which the city grew. The small tank at its core was where three young Indian freedom fighters – Binay Badal and Dinesh – shot the British inspector-general of police in 1930. The square, now named after them, is ringed by British colonial buildings, dating to the 18th and early 19th centuries. These were once the centres of British administrative and commercial control.



Job Charnock's Tomb
Job Charnock is believed to have laid the foundations of the English settlement in Kolkata

★ St John's Church

The design of this church (see p272) was based on London's St Martin-in-the-Fields. The constructing engineers wanted the spire to be higher, but desisted fearing the soggy sub-soil.

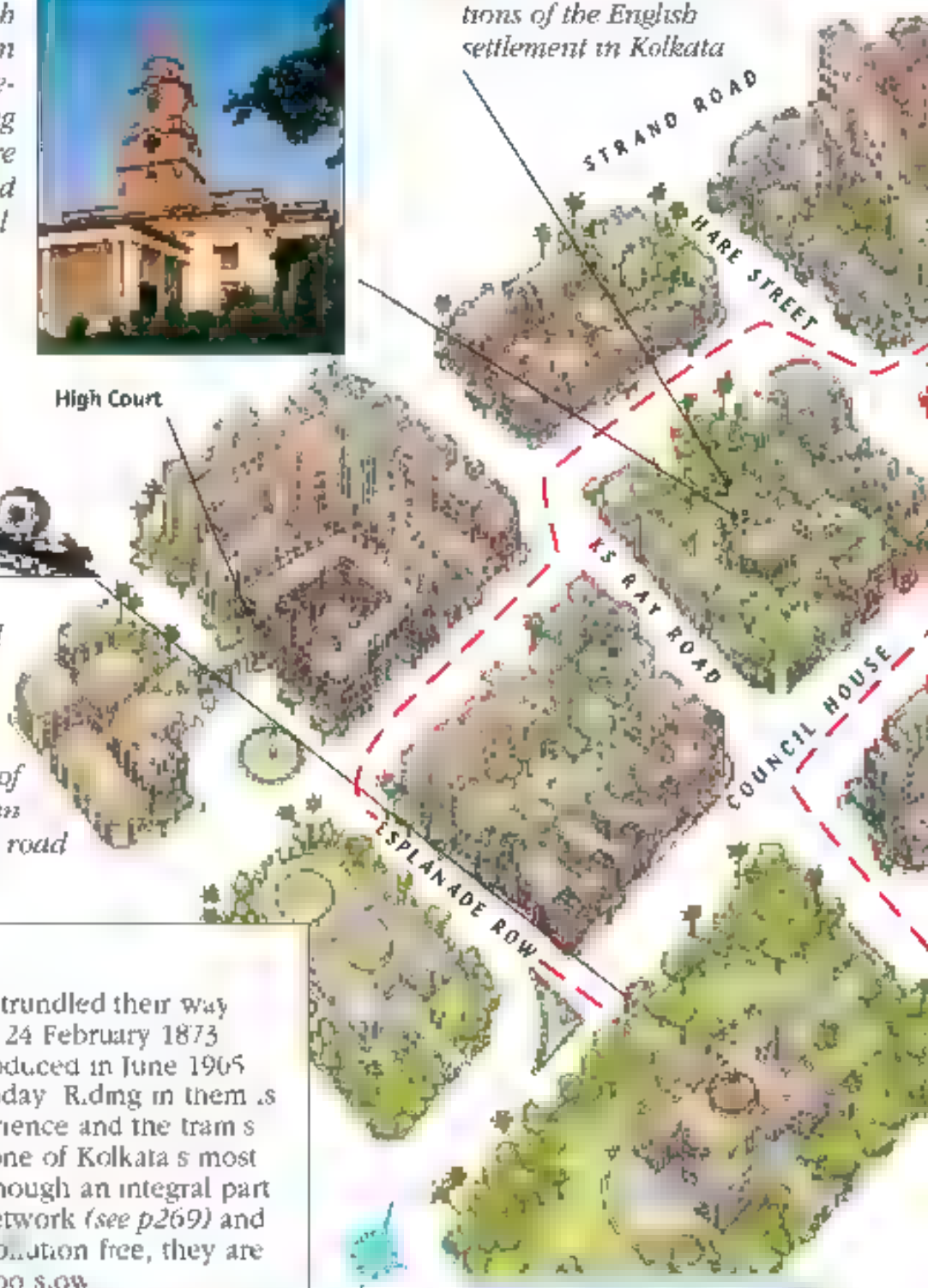


High Court



Gates of Raj Bhavan

Magnificent Neo-Classical gateways lead to the old Government House, built in the mid-18th century. This is now the residence of the state governor, and can be viewed from across the road.



TRAMS IN KOLKATA

Horse drawn trams first trundled their way from Sealdah station on 24 February 1873. Electric trams were introduced in June 1905 and have survived till today. Riding in them is a pleasant if rattly experience and the tram's slowly clanging bell is one of Kolkata's most characteristic sounds. Though an integral part of the city's transport network (see p269) and appreciated for being pollution free, they are under threat for being too slow.



An electric tram plying on the streets of Kolkata

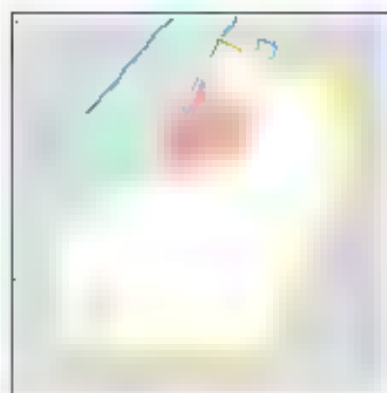
STAR SIGHTS

- ★ St John's Church
- ★ GPO
- ★ Writers' Building



★ GPO

Kolkata's General Post Office is housed in this building with its impressive rotunda. Designed by Walter Granville and built in the 1860s, it stands on the site of the old mud fort.



LOCATOR MAP

See Kolkata Map pp268-9



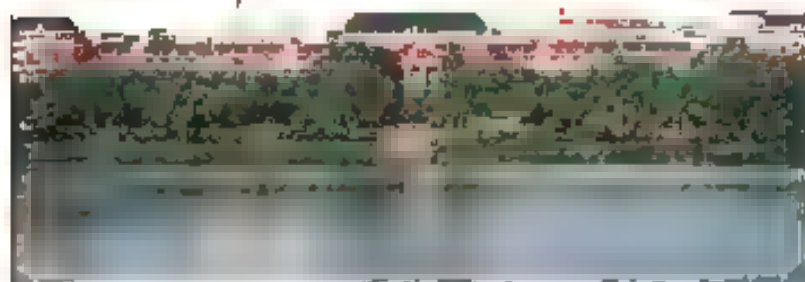
St Andrew's Kirk

Consecrated in 1818, the church has a soaring steeple, a magnificent organ and a beautifully carved pulpit.



★ Writers' Building

The hub of colonial India from 1777, this imposing building with its Corinthian façade derives its name from the "writers" (clerks) of the East India Company who worked here. The state government has its offices here.



View Across Lal Dighi Tank

The East India Company's seat of administration, their courts of justice and the churches for their Sunday services were set up around this small tank, fed by springs.



View of St John's Church with its soaring spire

St John's Church 2

Council House St. Tel (033) 2243 6098.

☐ daily ☒ 10am–5pm

The first parish church in Kolkata, St John's Church was established in 1787. It boasts an impressive stained-glass panel of *The Last Supper*, in which the artist Johann Zoffany gave the 12 disciples the faces of British personalities famous in the city at the time.

St John's has many associations with the history of the English East India Company. Warren Hastings, Governor of Bengal, was named here. In the churchyard is a memorial to Lady Canning, the vicereine who died in 1861. Her name lives on in popular memory because she was much addicted to a fried, syrupy sweetmeat, which was named after her (it is pronounced "leddy-kenny" in Bengali). The mausoleum of Job Charnock (see p270) also stands here.

A short distance away is the memorial to the victims of the notorious "Black Hole Tragedy", an event which became one of the favourite horror stories of the Raj. When Siraj-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Bengal, captured the old British fort which stood on the site of the present General Post Office (see p271) in 1756, he imprisoned over 100 British inhabitants in a small airless cell. Only 23 people were found alive the next morning – the rest had died of asphyxiation and thirst.

Nilhat House 3

Behind Old Mission Church. Auctions held on Mon & Tue at 8:30am. Prior permission required from brokerage houses. J Thomas Tel (033) 2248 6201

A tea auction centre, Nilhat House stands on the site of an indigo trading house (*nil* means indigo, while *hat* is market). It dates to 1861, only the tea auction houses in London are older. Tea has always played an important role in the state's economy especially in the colonial period. But even today the bidding for teas from Darjeeling and the Dooars in northern Bengal and Assam (see pp262–3) is brisk. The auction prices are determined by the opinions of tea tasters whose highly trained palates can immediately distinguish the type, plantation and year of each brew. Visitors can view and participate in these animated proceedings with prior permission.

College Street 4

Bidhan Sarani, North Kolkata
Ashutosh Museum Tel (033) 2241 0071 ☐ 10:30am–5pm Mon–Fri,
10:30am–7:30pm Sat ☒

As the location of Kolkata's elite educational institutions, College Street is the heart of Bengali intellectual life. The pavements are crowded with stalls selling textbooks, exam guides, classics and second-hand books of all kinds – some people even claim to have discovered valuable first editions. Many of Kolkata's best bookshops are also found here.

The **Presidency College** was established here in 1817 and was then known as the Hindu College. Started as an institution for the city's rich who wanted their sons to receive a Western-style education, it boasts great scholars, scientists and writers such

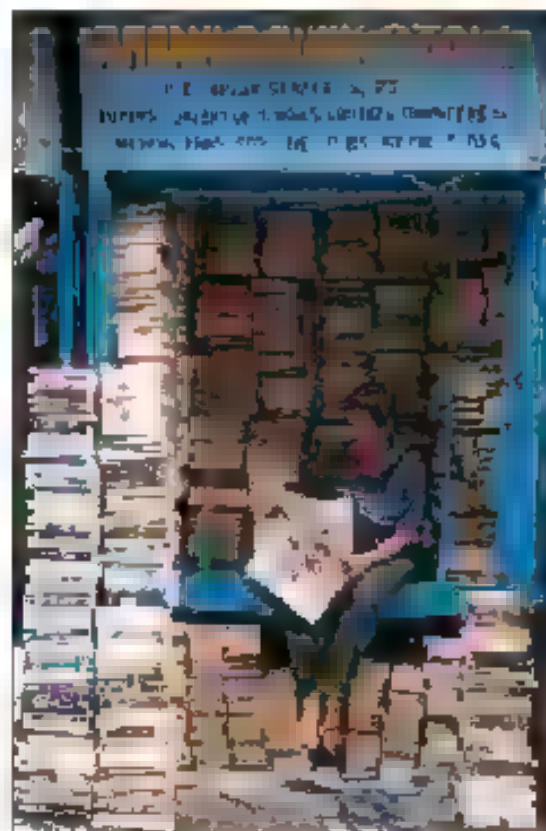
as film director Satyajit Ray (1922–92) and economist Amartya Sen, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in the year 1998.

Across the road is the dark cavernous **Indian Coffee House**, the favourite haunt of the city's intelligentsia since it opened in 1942. Even today, waiters in shabby cummerbunds serve endless cups of strong coffee to teachers, students, writers and poets.

Down a lane opposite Presidency College is the **Sanskrit College**, founded in 1821 to promote the study of ancient Indian languages, history and culture. Its ground floor has a small display of medieval Hindu sculpture and palm-leaf manuscripts.

Next to Presidency College are the buildings of **Calcutta University**, founded in 1857. Today the gracious 19th-century main structure is dwarfed by modern high-rise additions, through which the old edifice, with its Ionic pillars and symmetrical proportions, is barely visible.

On the ground floor the **Ashutosh Museum** specializes in the art of Eastern India. The exhibits include a fine collection of terracottas, bronzes, coins, old manuscripts and some exquisite examples of *kantha* (a quilting technique) and Kalighat paintings or *pats* (see p279).



A second-hand bookstore on College Street



Detail of the ornamental entrance of Nakhoda Mosque

Nakhoda Mosque 5

Zakana St. Tel (033, 2235 4183

☐ daily ☑ to non-Muslims during times of prayer ❧

The city's largest mosque Nakhoda Mosque is based on the design of Akbar's tomb at Sikandra (see p178). Built in 1926, it is surmounted by a dome and faced with red sandstone, with minarets that rise to a height of 46 m (151 ft). It can accommodate over 10,000 people for prayer, but on major religious occasions, people spill out on to the street. Nearby is the **Hotel Royal** famous for its rich *biryani* and *chaanp* (goat's ribs cooked in spiced gravy). This is a fascinating neighbourhood with 19th-century mansions, old bazaars and temples.

Armenian Church of St Nazareth 6

Armenian St, near Brabourne Rd. Tel (033, 2242 4308. ☐ daily

Built by Armenian traders in 1724, the Armenian Church of St Nazareth stands on the site of the original 1707 wooden church, which had burnt down. Immigrants from Isfahan in Persia, the Armenians were among the earliest foreign traders to settle in Kolkata. Once a thriving community, today their numbers have dwindled. The church has a unique rounded spire, and its grounds house several graves with ornate tombstones.

Maidan 7

Bounded by Strand Rd, A.C. Bose Rd, Cathedral Rd & Eden Gardens Rd.

St Paul's Cathedral ☐ daily

☑ 7.30am, 8.30am & 6pm Sun.

In the heart of the city, this 400-ha (988-acre) park stretches from the Hooghly river in the west to Chowringhee in the east, and contains several interesting areas and buildings. In the early 18th century, a dense jungle was cut down to build **Fort William**, after the earlier mud fort was destroyed in 1756. The present fort, a squat irregular octagon, was completed in 1781. Today, it is the headquarters of the Indian Army's Eastern Command and not usually open to the public.

To the north of the fort are the pleasantly laid out **Eden Gardens**, where international cricket matches are held. They were conceived and designed in 1841 by Emily and Fanny Eden, the sisters of the governor general, Lord Auckland. At the northern corner of the Maidan is the **Burmese Pavilion** set in a small lake. This was brought here by Lord Dalhousie from Prome in Myanmar in 1854.

To its east is the **Shahid Minar**, literally "Martyrs' Memorial" originally called Ochterlony Monument. It was

named after Sir David Ochterlony, one of the Raj's daredevil soldiers, who had led the British armies to victory in the Anglo-Nepal War in 1816. The monument is a fluted Doric column, 48 m (157 ft) high with a cupola for a roof. To its south is the Maidan's most impressive building, the **Victoria Memorial** (see pp274-5).

A short distance from the Memorial is **St Paul's Cathedral**. It was designed by Major WN

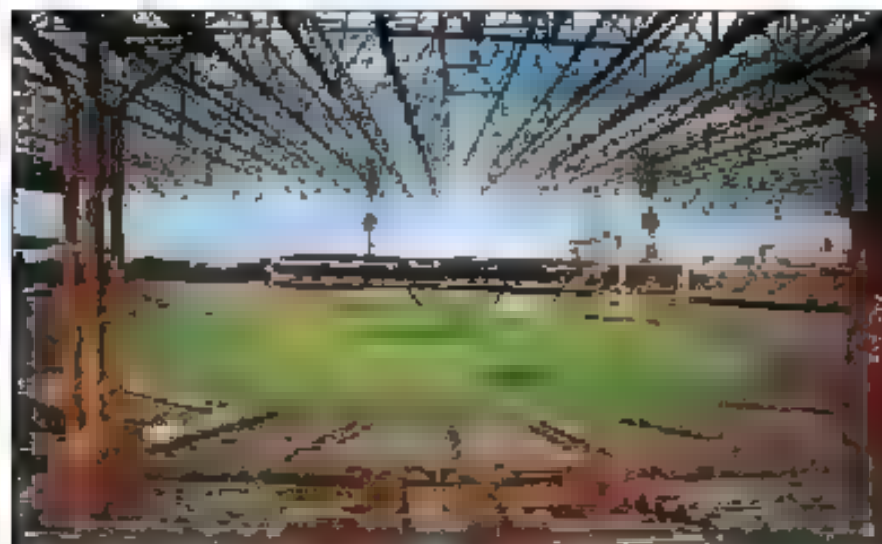
Forbes in 1847 and its spire, modelled on Britain's Canterbury Cathedral, was added after the earlier one was destroyed in the 1934 earthquake. Its grounds are lined with trees and the interior is notable for a superb stained-glass window, designed by Edward Burne-Jones in memory of the viceroy Lord Mayo. The **Race Course** is on the southwestern corner of the Maidan. Racing is popular in Kolkata and races are held throughout the year. Polo is played here

for a few weeks in the winter season. The city's two famous football clubs, Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, are based in the Maidan.

On Sunday afternoons, a lively fair with acrobats, magicians and jugglers takes place at the northern end of the Maidan. This is also the venue for large political rallies.



Stained glass, St Paul's Cathedral



Eden Gardens, the site of many cricket matches

Victoria Memorial



Imperial lion at the entrance

The city's most celebrated landmark, this monument to imperial self-confidence was the brainchild of Lord Curzon (1859–1925), one of British India's most flamboyant viceroys. The domed Classical structure, completed in 1921, was

constructed with marble from Makrana, which also supplied marble for the Taj Mahal, and financed by "donations" from princes and ordinary citizens. Now a museum, its 25 galleries are spread over the ground and first floors. The collection, which covers a fascinating selection of Raj memorabilia, includes the Calcutta Gallery, with oil paintings and watercolours of the city's history



Lord Cornwallis

This 18th-century governor general established the Raj's administration



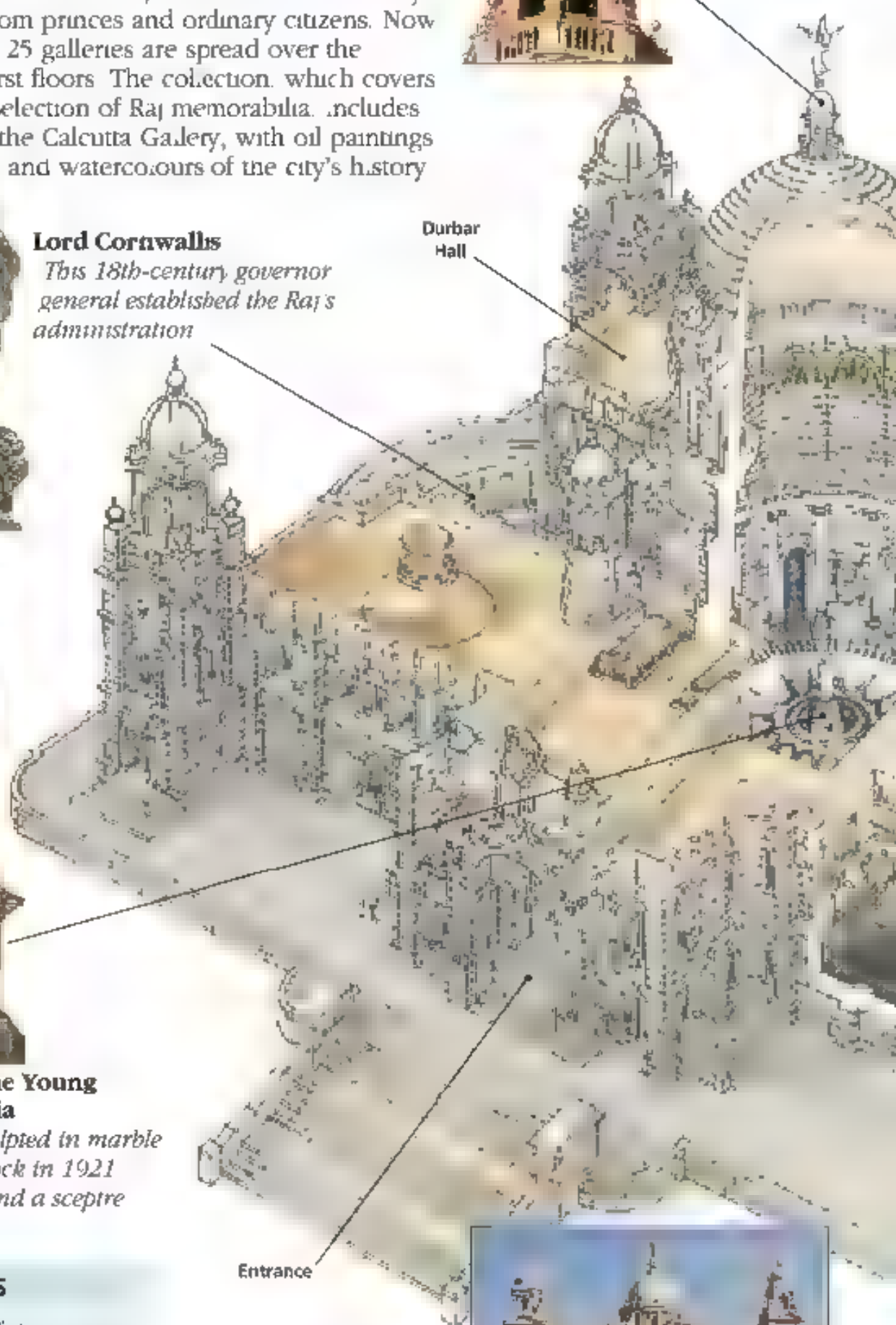
★ Statue of the Young Queen Victoria

The queen, sculpted in marble by Thomas Brock in 1921, holds an orb and a sceptre



★ Angel of Victory

Surmounting the dome is this 6-m (20-ft) high bronze revolving figure, with a trumpet made in Italy



Durbar Hall

Entrance

STAR SIGHTS

★ Angel of Victory

★ Statue of the Young Queen Victoria

General View
The impressive marble façade of the Victoria Memorial



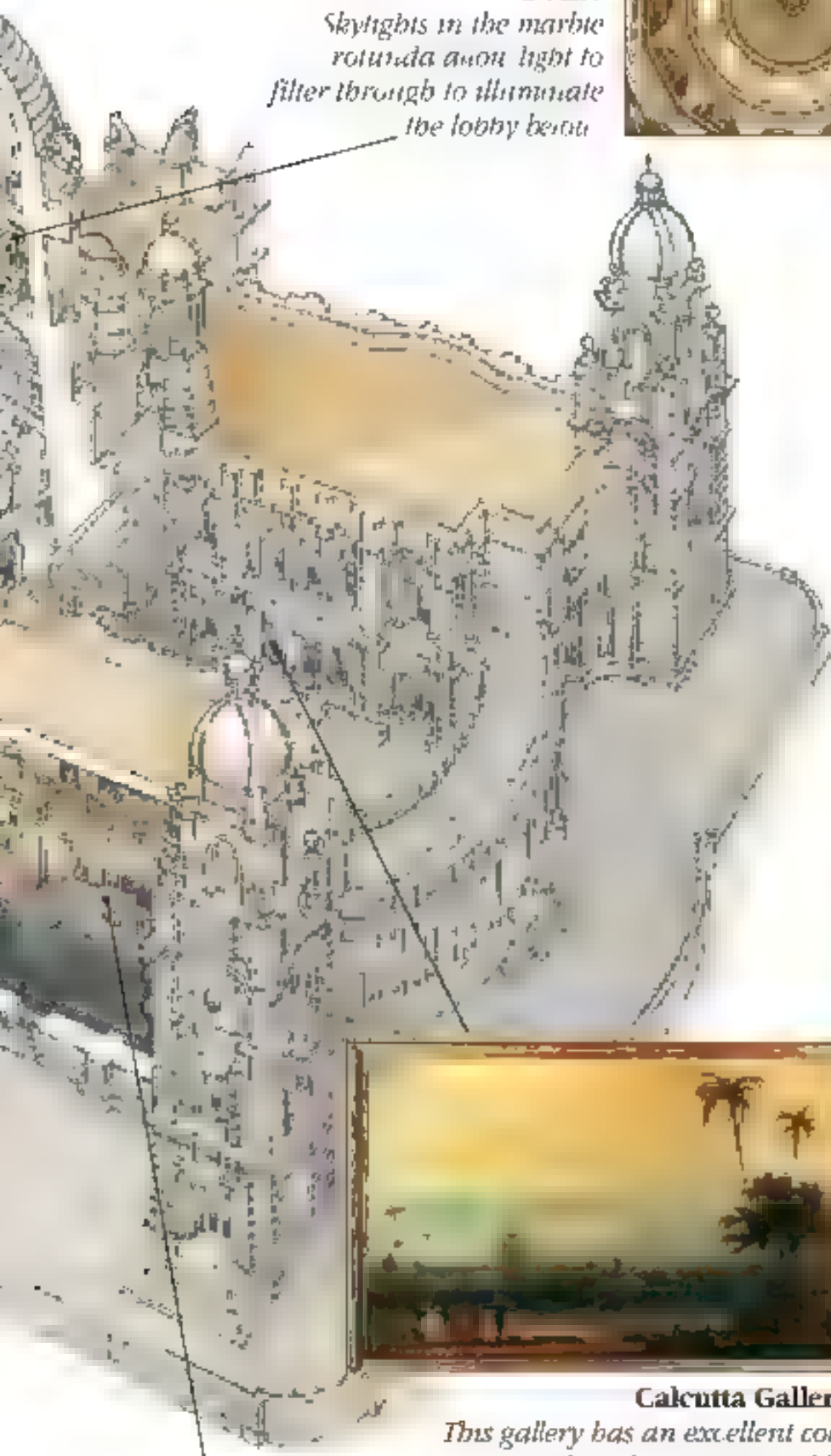
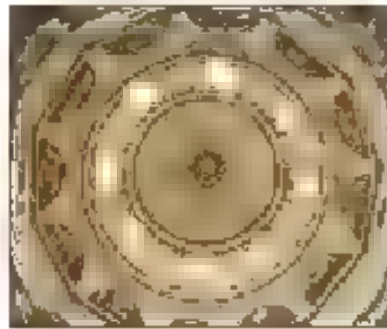


Bronze Panel

Two bronze panels depicting a vice-regal procession decorate the bridge at the northern entrance to the Memorial.

Dome

Skylights in the marble rotunda allow light to filter through to illuminate the lobby below.



Calcutta Gallery

This gallery has an excellent collection of landscapes painted by 18th-century British artists.

Picture Gallery

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Queen's Way Tel (033) 2223 5142

☐ Tue–Sun ☑ public hols ☑

☑ ☑ Son et Lumière (English, 7.15pm, Oct–Feb, 7.45pm, Mar–Jun)

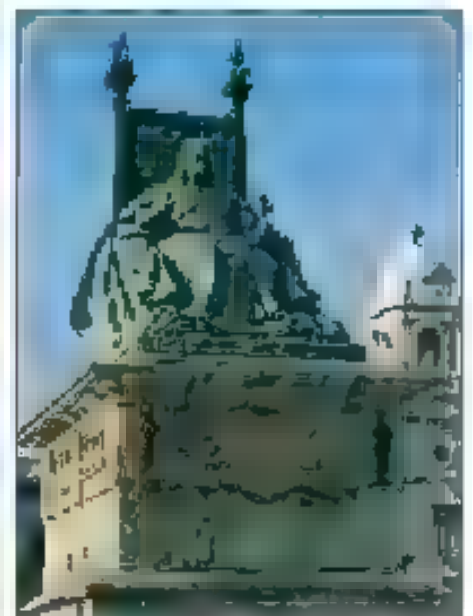
☑ www.victoriamemorial-cal.org

Exploring the Victoria Memorial

The foundation stone of this impressive structure was laid

by the Prince of Wales (later King George V) during his visit to India in 1906. Designed by William Emerson, President of the British Institute of Architects, the building stands in spacious grounds, dotted with ornamentation, palms,

ponds and statues. The museum contains over 10,000 art facts that represent various facets of the Raj, such as a desk owned by Queen Victoria, embellished with paintings of Indian birds. Among the fine collection of paintings are works by the 18th-century landscape artists Thomas Daniell and his nephew William Daniell, whose aquatints and lithographs of Indian scenes virtually determined the way India was perceived in 19th-century Britain. The collection also includes paintings by Johann Zoffany (1733–1810), portraits of imperial stalwarts, records of the East India Company, an exquisite set of Persian manuscripts, and paintings that depict Kolkata's history.



A majestic bronze statue of Queen Victoria by Sir George Frampton.

Chowringhee 9

JL Nehru Rd **The Asiatic Society**
Park St **Tel** (033, 2229 2249 **Library**
☐ Mon–Sat **Museum** ☐ noon–4pm
Mon–Fri **www.asiaticsocietycal.com**

New named Jawahara
Nehru Road Chowringhee
was a fashionable promenade
during the Raj. This thorough-
fare derives its name from a
fakir (holy man), Jungle Guri
Chowringhee, who once lived
here. At its northern end is
the **Oberoi Grand** (see
p699). Established in the
1870s, and known as the
Grand Hotel, it was consid-
ered “the most Popular,
Fashionable and Attractive
Hotel in India.”

Behind the Oberoi Grand is
New Market (see p282), built
in 1874. Surmounted by a
clock tower, shops here are
placed along many intercon-
nected corridors. One of the
oldest is the Jewish confec-
tionery and bakery,
Nahoum’s, which has a
beguiling variety of cookies,
fudge and spiced cakes.

At its southern end, on Park
Street, is **The Asiatic Society**,
founded in 1784 by Sir
William Jones, a formidable
Oriental scholar. He was the
first to establish the common
origins of Latin and Sanskrit
and called Sanskrit the
“mother of all languages.”
The Society’s **Museum** and
Library have a large collection
of over 60,000 old and rare
manuscripts in Sanskrit,
Arabic and Persian, as well as
artifacts such as a 3rd-century
BC stone edict, and 17th-
century folios from the
Padshahnama, Akbar, Hamid
Lahori’s history of the Mughal
emperor Shah Jahan’s rule.



The well-preserved period façade of
Chowringhee building

Indian Museum 10

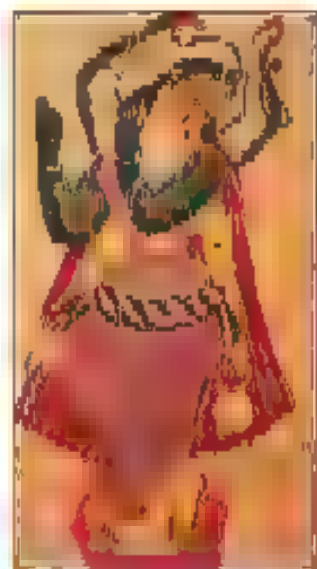


Gupta era
gold coin

The oldest and largest museum in India,
the Indian Museum was founded in 1814.
The imposing building, designed by
Walter Granville, also the architect of the
General Post Office (see p271), dates to
1878. The museum’s impressive collection
is noted for artifacts from the 2,500 BC
Indus Valley Civilization, sculpture from
Gandhara, the superbly sculpted
raillings from the 2,000-year-old
Bharhut Stupa, and a fine collection
of 5th-century Gupta coins.

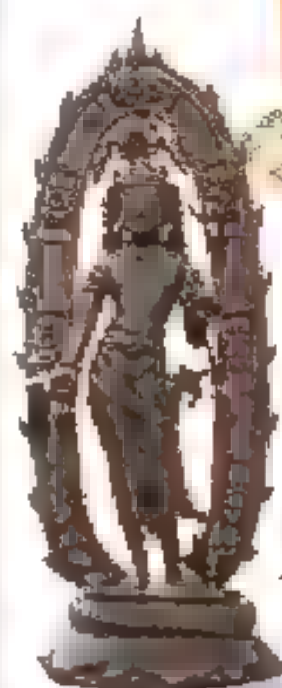
Kalighat Painting

*Painted in the folk style of the 19th
century Kalighat school, this represents
the Vaishnava saint Chaitanya*



Arhat Vanavasin Thangka

*This silk
painting of a
Buddhist sage is
from Tibet*



Pala Bronze

*This 12th-century
Bodhisattva figure shows
the fluid grace of
Pala sculpture*

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Gandhara Sculpture
- ★ Bharhut Railings



Nautch Party

This 19th-century Company School painting of nautch or dancing girls, combines European and Indian techniques of art

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

1. Nehru Rd Tel (033) 2286 1702

☐ Tue-Sun ☐ public hols ☐

📷 extra charges 📺

Note: Educational film shows daily, and special exhibitions

Chandela Sculpture

Dating to the 10th-11th century, this sensuous maiden from Khajuraho holds a baby in her arms while two small children cling to her knees



KEY

- ☐ Art and Textile Gallery
- ☐ Geology Section
- ☐ Botany Section
- ☐ Zoological Section
- ☐ Anthropology Section
- ☐ Archaeology Gallery
- ☐ Egyptian Gallery
- ☐ Numismatics Gallery
- ☐ Library

★ Gandhara Sculpture

Dating to the 3rd century, this image of Maitreya, the Future Buddha, shows a strong Greek influence in the way the folds of the robe are sculpted



First floor

Ground floor

Entrance

GALLERY GUIDE

Built around a courtyard are two storeys of galleries. The Archaeology Gallery, to the right of the main entrance, has railings from the Bharhut, Sanchi as well as displays of ancient and medieval sculpture. The Numismatics Gallery has coins dating from 500 BC to the 17th century. The Zoological Section exhibits stuffed birds from British zoological expeditions. The second floor has the Art Gallery with paintings and miniatures.



★ Bharhut Railings

Episodes from Buddhist scriptures, events from the Buddha's life and scenes from daily life are carved on these railings



A Sister of Charity outside the Mother House

Mother House ⑪

54A, A/C Bose Rd. **Tel** (033) 2217 2277 ☐ Fri–Wed. **www** motherteresa.org **Donations** are tax-exempt

The city of Kolkata is inextricably linked to the name of Mother Teresa. At first a teaching nun at Loreto Convent, the death and devastation she witnessed in the city during the famine of 1943 and Partition of India in 1947 (see p26), made her leave this cloistered world and dedicate her life to the poor. The Missionaries of Charity was a new order she formed in 1950, with the Mother House as its headquarters. This simple building is today also her final resting place. Her grave is on the ground floor in a hall. It has no ornamentation, only a Bible placed on it. On a board on the wall are two words, "I thirst."

Park Street Cemetery ⑫

Bounded by Rawdon St & Park St
☐ Mon–Fri

A romantic, overgrown haven of Raj nostalgia in the middle of the city, the Park Street Cemetery was opened in August 1767 to receive the body of John Wood, an official in the Custom House of the East India Company. From that date till the first half of the 19th century, it served as the resting place of many important Europeans who died in Kolkata. It was this graveyard which gave Park Street its original name, Burial Ground Road. Its name Park Street was derived from the park that Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court established in the area. His grave is in this cemetery as well. William Jones, the great scholar and founder of The Asiatic Society, lies under a pyramid-shaped tomb. Henry Vansittart, one of the first governors of Bengal, is also buried here, so too is Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809–1831), a Eurasian teacher at Hindu College in the mid-19th century who died at the young age of 23. Derozio inspired his students to question all established traditions and was one of the pioneers of what has come to be known as the Bengal

Renaissance (see p260). The next known tomb is that of Rose Aylmer, an early love of the poet, Walter Savage Landor. Her tomb, an unpretentious spiralled obelisk, is inscribed with lines by Landor. Also buried here is Colonel Kyd, founder of the Botanical Gardens (see p281).

Alipore ⑬

Bounded by A/C Bose Rd, Belvedere Rd & Alipore Rd. **Alipore Zoological Gardens** ☐ 9am–5pm Fri–Wed ☐ **National Library** **Tel** (033) 2479 1384 ☐ daily ☒ public hols. ☐ **Agri Horticultural Society** **Tel** (033) 2479 0834 ☐ 7–10am & 2–6pm Mon–Sat **www** agnhorticultureindia.com ☒ Flower Show (Feb)

Best described as the city's most fashionable address, the suburb of Alipore in south Kolkata is a sylvan world of tree-lined avenues, with palatial houses surrounded by well-kept lawns. Kolkata's zoo, the **Alipore Zoological Gardens**, was established here in 1875 and has a large collection of birds and mammals. Situated nearby, the Belvedere Estate has a broad expanse of lawn and also houses the **National Library**. This is the country's largest library with over two million manuscripts and books. The library has now been shifted to the Bhasha Bhawan, a new building on the same



Weathered tombs in the tree-shaded Park Street Cemetery

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp699–700 and pp727–8



The National Library in Alipore, with its colonnaded verandah

grounds. Built in the Italian Renaissance style, the original building, Belvedere, was once the residence of the lieutenant governors of Bengal.

Further down are the lush gardens of the **Agri Horticultural Society** founded in September 1820 by the missionary William Carey (see p287), to develop and promote agriculture and horticulture in India. In the first 40 years of its existence, seeds, bulbs and ornamental plants were imported from England, South Africa and Southeast Asia. Since then the Society has amassed a varied collection of rare flowering trees and herbs. It's also an excellent place to buy winter annuals.

Kalighat ⑩

Ashutosh Mukherjee Rd. ☐ daily

Kolkata's oldest pilgrimage site, Kalighat finds mention in numerous medieval poems and ballads. Legend has it that the god Shiva, in a fury of grief at the death of his

wife, Sati (an incarnation of Parvati), slung her body on his shoulders and danced the terrible *tandava nritya* (dance of death), destroying everything in his path. To stop the carnage, Vishnu flung his magic *chakra* (discus) at Sati's body, and the dismembered pieces scattered across the land. The spot where the little toe fell became Kalighat, and some believe that the name Kolkata is derived from this.

The present Kali Temple dates to the early 19th century, but this has been a sacred spot for much longer. The image of the goddess in the dark inner sanctum is of a wild, untamed figure, with tangled tresses and wide, ferocious eyes. Her extended tongue has a gold covering which is changed every day. The temple is always crowded, especially on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Kalighat has, over the years, become synonymous with *Kalighat pats* – a distinctive

painting style adopted by the scroll-painters of Bengal. They use paper and water-based paints, instead of tempera, to depict contemporary subjects. A good collection of *Kalighat pats* is on display at the Indian Museum (see pp276–7).

Nirmal Hridaya ⑪

251, Kalighat Rd. Tel 4033, 2464 4223 ☐ 8–11am & 3–5pm
Mon–Sat, 3–5pm Sun

Mother Teresa's home for the destitute Nirmal Hridaya ("Pure Heart"), is near the Kali Temple. The site was probably chosen as this holy place teems with poor and old people, who come here to die and attain *moksha*. A large, clean hall is full of beds for the sick and dying who are cared for by nuns in their characteristic white and blue saris. Visitors who want to work as volunteers must first register at Mother House.



The brick-and-mortar spire of the Kali Temple at Kalighat



Kalighat painting of two wandering mendicants

MOTHER TERESA (1910–1997)

Mother Teresa, born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in Albania, came to Calcutta in 1929 to begin life as a teacher. The poverty and suffering she saw impelled her to leave the convent. She set up the order of the Missionaries of Charity and her indefatigable work among the lepers, the terminally ill, the unwanted and the poor earned her universal respect and love. To the people of Kolkata she was just "Mother" and their love for her transcended boundaries of religion, class and community. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.



Mother Teresa on a postage stamp



Kim Li Loi, a family-run Chinese restaurant in Tangra

Tangra 16

Off the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass.
 🗺️ Chinese New Year (Feb.)

This eastern suburb is the city's new Chinatown. Chinese immigration to Kolkata began in the 18th century, and today large numbers of this still significant community have settled here. Tangra preserves the rich and varied culture of its immigrant population. A Chinese newspaper and journals are published from here, and there are many tiny restaurants, mostly extensions of family kitchens. "Tangra Chinese", with its discernibly Indian taste, is today as distinct a cuisine as Szechwan and Cantonese. Many of the city's leather anneries are based at Tangra as, traditionally, the Chinese were involved with the very lucrative shoe trade.

Marble Palace 17

46, Mukta Ram Babu St. 🕒 10am–4pm Mon, Thu, & Sat 🗺️ 📄 Entry permit. Contact Tourism Centre, 312 BBD Bagh, (033) 2248 8271.

This opulent mansion was built in 1835 by Raja Rajendra Mullick, a wealthy *zamindar* (landowner). His descendants still live here, but most of the house is open to visitors. Rajendra Mullick, who had traveled extensively in Europe, brought back an eclectic collection of Venetian

chandeliers, Ming vases and Egyptian statuary that he housed in his Classical-fronted mansion, built around a colonnaded courtyard. Today, the Marble Palace provides a wonderful glimpse into the life of a rich 19th-century Bengali household. Nearly a 100 varieties of marble have been used on the floors and the dark halls are hung with paintings by European artists. In the courtyard is the family temple while the grounds have a rock garden and aviary, home to mynahs and peacocks.

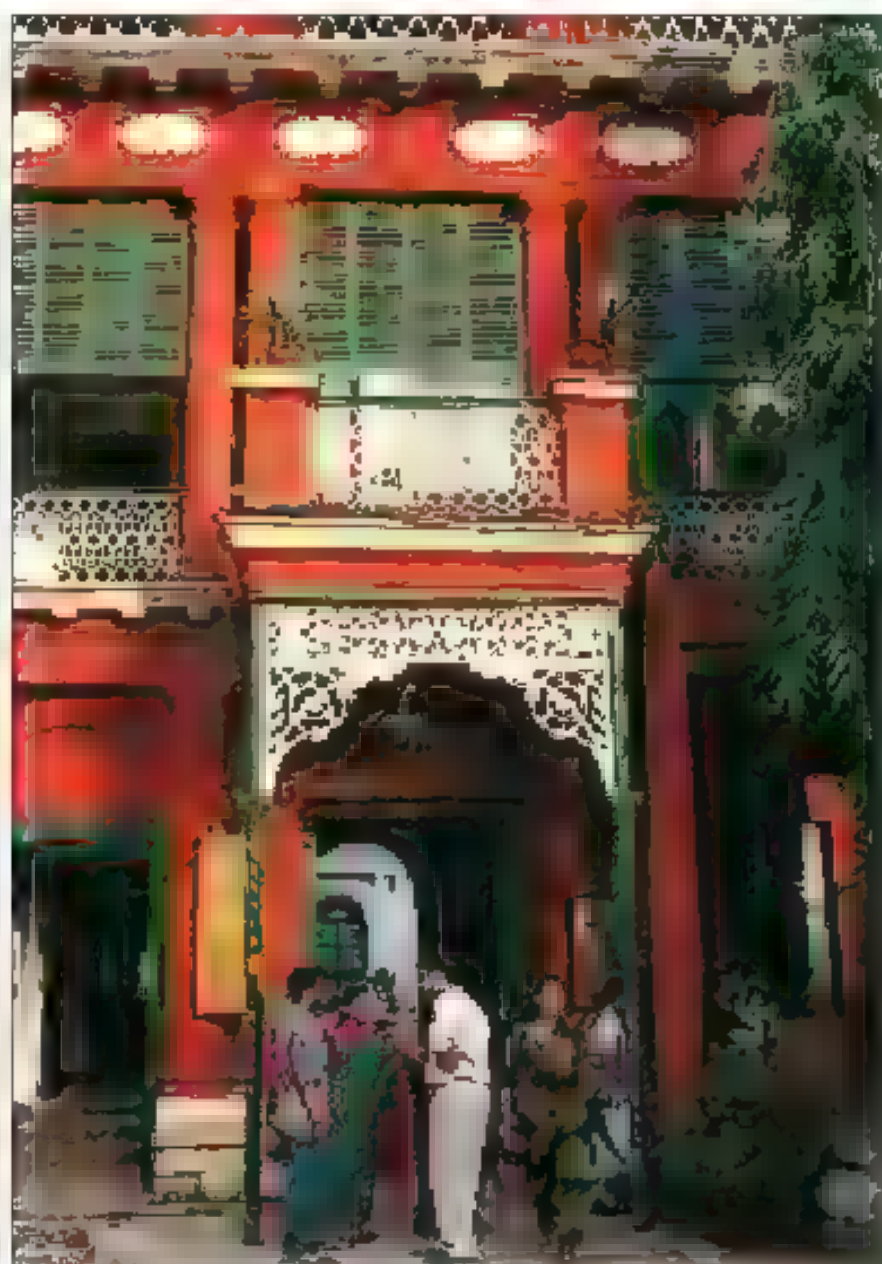
Jorasanko 18

6/4, Dwarkanath Tagore Lane
Rabindra Bharati Museum Tel: (033) 2269 6610. 🕒 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat & Sun. 🗺️
Son et Lumière 6 & 7pm (English) 🕒 Mon & Thu. 🗺️ 📄 Rabindranath Tagore's birthday (May).

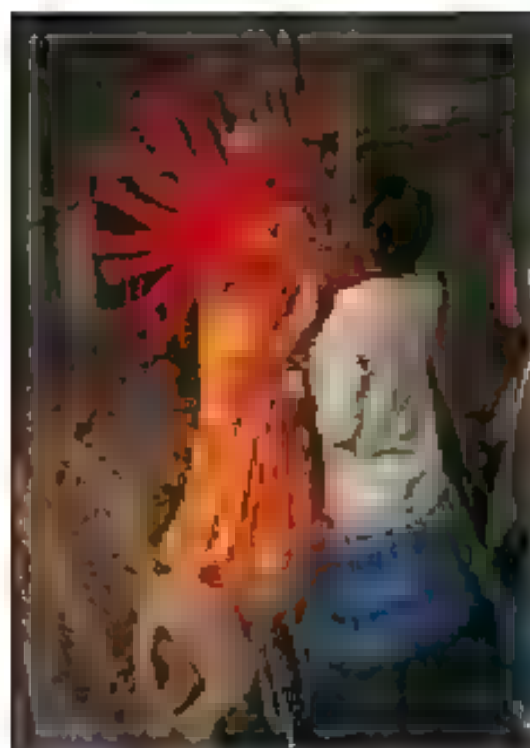
A major centre of Bengali art and culture in the 19th

century, Jorasanko is the ancestral home of Bengal's favourite son, Rabindranath Tagore (see p292). Built in 1785, this simple three-storeyed, red brick structure housed the lively and cultivated Tagore family, many of whose members were prominent intellectuals and social reformers. The lane on which the house is located is named after Dwarkanath Tagore (1784–1846), the poet's father and a wealthy entrepreneur.

Today, the old house has been expanded and turned into **Rabindra Bharati University**, which specializes in the study of Bengali cultural forms. The house itself has been preserved as the **Rabindra Bharati Museum**. Beginning with the room in which Rabindranath Tagore died, it traces the history of the illustrious Tagore family with a large collection of art and memorabilia. There is an entire section devoted to paintings by Rabindranath



The red brick Rabindra Bharati University, at Jorasanko



Final touches being given to a Durga image

Kumartuli 19

North Chitpur Rd

Literally the Area of the Potters, Kumartuli is a maze of alleys, where images of various Hindu gods and goddesses are made. The best time to visit is late August and early September as this is when potters create the idols for the ten-day-long Durga Puja. It is fascinating to watch them at work, moulding the clay, strengthened by straw and pith, to create images of the fish-eyed goddess Durga, her face often modelled on popular Hindi film actresses and her hair long and flowing.

Nearby is an ancient temple dedicated to Shiva, known as the **Buro Shiva** or 'Old Shiva Temple'. This is probably the only extant terracotta temple in the city, embellished with

terracotta tablets in the frieze below the roof. Further away is Kolkata's celebrated landmark, the giant **Howrah Bridge** (now called Rabindra Setu), an airy elegant mesh of steel that appears to float above the turgid Hooghly river (see p267). The sunset behind the bridge is one of the loveliest sights in the city. Built in 1943 to replace the old pontoon bridge, this is the third longest cantilever bridge in the world, measuring 97 m (318 ft) in height and 705 m (2,313 ft) in length. The bridge links

Kolkata with Howrah (Howrah the city's main railway station) on the opposite bank, and is always clogged with traffic. To its south is the impressive Vidyasagar Setu. This massive cable-stayed suspension bridge was built in 1993 to connect South Kolkata with Shibpur and Howrah station.

Botanical Gardens 20

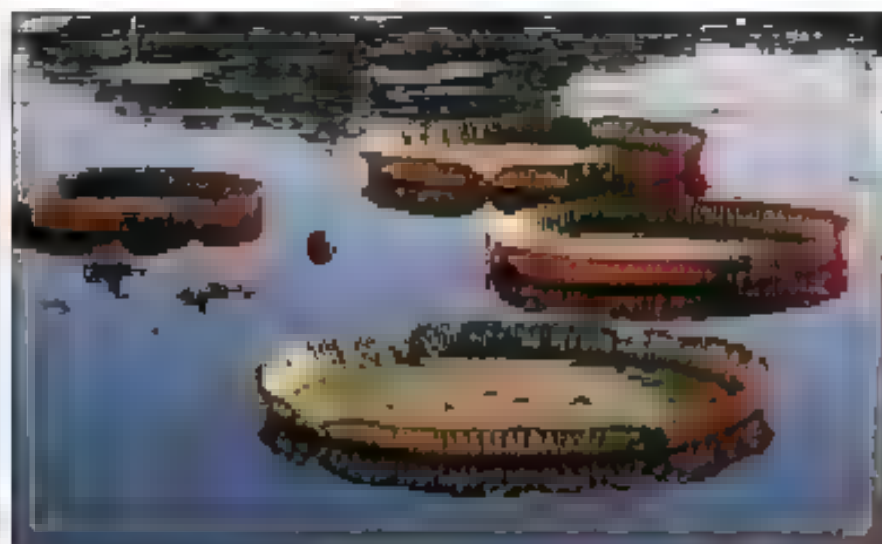
W bank of the Hooghly river, Shibpur

☞ from Babu Ghat Tel (033) 2668 9970 ☐ daily **The Palm House**

☐ Mon–Fri **The National Herbarium** ☐ Mon–Fri

● Weekends and public holidays

The Botanical gardens, in the Shibpur suburb of Howrah, were established in 1787 by Colonel Kyd, an official of the East India Company. It has an astonishing array of flora including ferns, cacti and palms, and boasts of plants from every continent. The chief attraction is the magnificent banyan tree (*Ficus bengalensis*). Claimed to be the largest banyan tree in the world, it is more than 200 years old and its branches, giving rise to nearly 300 aerial roots, spread over 60 m (195 ft). The central trunk was, however, struck by lightning in 1919 and was subsequently removed. The sight of this tree alone is worth the long journey.

The gigantic leaves of the *Victoria amazonica* lily, Botanical Gardens

THE DURGA PUJA



Image of the ten-armed Durga, slaying Mahisha

Durga Puja is West Bengal's favourite annual ritual in which simply everyone participates. Usually held between September and October, it heralds the advent of autumn and the new harvest. Each locality sets up its own *puga*, organized by local clubs and associations, financed through public subscriptions, though some of the old Bengali families perform their own *puga* in their ancestral houses. Brightly illuminated *pandals* (bamboo structures), often shaped like famous monuments such as the White House or the Taj Mahal, are erected on roads and in parks, and an image of the goddess Durga (see p23) is installed within. The goddess is elaborately decorated and in traditional Bengali homes, real jewellery is used. Presents are exchanged and great feasts are prepared. On the final day, the images are immersed in the Hooghly, to the frantic beating of drums and cries of 'Ja Ma Durga' ('Hail to Mother Durga!').

Shopping & Entertainment in Kolkata

Kolkata is a delightful place to shop even though it lacks the fashionable boutiques of Delhi or Mumbai. There are several old-style bazaars and street hawkers, and fewer gitzzy shopping malls. Many shops stock a wide variety of goods, such as those in New Market, others cater to special niches. In certain places one needs to drive hard bargains – the shopkeepers both expect and enjoy this process. Kolkata was once famous for its auction houses, but sadly most of these have now shut down. This is also a culturally vibrant city, with regular performances of theatre, music and film shows. Exhibitions by well-known contemporary artists are also held throughout the year.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

Kolkata's **New Market** (see p276), on Lindsay Street, is the city's most famous shopping centre. Officially the Sir Stuart Hogg New Municipal Market, established in 1874, this is still a shopper's paradise, where one can find everything from Chinese sausages and fortune cookies to Tibetan curios and gold jewellery. **Sudder Street**, behind the Indian Museum, is another popular shopping centre. Each locality has its own bazaar: the best known of these are Gariahat, Bhowanipore (or Jadubabu's Bazaar), Bowbazaar and Maniktola. Wandering through bazaars offers a glimpse of street life, but be prepared for touts and beggars.

Shops usually open from 10am to 7pm and remain closed on Sundays and public holidays. New Market and some markets also close after 2pm on Saturday, so do check the timings in advance.

SARIS AND TEXTILES

The best shops for saris unique to West Bengal are **Ananda Meera Bose** and **Kundahar**. Ananda also has an excellent selection of dhotis and *kurtas*. The upmarket boutique **Ritu's** has superb garments designed by Ritu Kumar, one of India's top designers. Exquisite hand-embroidered table linen and children's clothes are available at **Good Companions**. Carpets and *dhurries* are available at **Calcutta Carpets**.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Handicrafts special to West Bengal such as the terracotta Bankura horse (see p261), are on sale at **Manjusha Emporium**. The **Crafts Council of West Bengal** is another fascinating outlet that sells traditional saris as well as artifacts, while **Sasha** has a wide range of curios and bric-a-brac. Tea of the finest quality is available at **Dolly's Tea Shop** in the Dakshinapan shopping complex. This complex also has numerous other state handicraft emporia.

BOOKS AND MUSIC

This city of intellectuals and Nobel laureates, such as Rabindranath Tagore and Anuradha Sen, is heaven for those willing to search for second-hand bargains in the shops that line the pavements of **College Street** (see p271) and **Free School Street**. Many of these shops have a good selection of rare and out of print books. **Dasgupta & Co** has a large choice, though there is no place to browse. The **Seagull Bookstore**, on the other hand, encourages browsing and is the best place for serious literature and academic books. **Starmark** too, has a large stock that ranges from thrillers to encyclopedias. The centrally located **Oxford Bookstore** is also well-stocked and has a good cafe. Music aficionados are advised to try **Music World** which has a good selection of

Indian and Western CDs and audio cassettes. On Chitpur Road towards Nakhoda Mosque (see p273) are music shops selling sitars, *sarods*, *veenas*, flutes and violins. Free School Street is about the only place in India where record albums of 1950s Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis or 1960s Beatles and Rolling Stones are easily available.

SWEETS

West Bengal's sweets are famous. The variety is bewildering, but the two most popular are *sandesh* and *rasgulla* (see p264). The latter is on sale in every sweetshop, but those in **KC Das & Sons**, the family which invented this delicacy, are the best. *Sandesh*, made of cottage cheese and sugar (molasses or *gur* in the winter months) are of two kinds: those that are soft and those that have a harder outer crust. Both are widely available, but the best are found in **Nakur Nandy & Girish Chandra Dey**, **Makhan Lal Das & Sons** and **Balaram Mullick**.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDES, TICKETS AND VENUES

The *Sunday Telegraph* magazine and other English language dailies list the day's entertainment on their engagements page. Other useful sources of information are *Cal Cutting* and *Kolkata This Fortnight*, which is distributed by the West Bengal Tourist office. Information on tickets as well as reviews of plays and concerts also appear with the announcements.

Kolkata's cultural centre is just off the Maidan. The **Rabindra Sadan Complex**, named after Rabindranath Tagore, includes the **Academy of Fine Arts**. Next door is **Nandan** where retrospectives of films by Satyajit Ray and other renowned directors, are regularly held. Other venues around the city include **89 Cinemas**, **Gorky Sadan**, **Fame** and the well-known **British Council**.

Exhibitions by well-known as well as up and coming artists are held at the city's many art galleries, especially the **Birla Academy of Art and Culture**, **CIMA Gallery** and **Chitrakoot Gallery**. CIMA Gallery also has a gift shop.

MUSIC AND THEATRE

Performances of West Bengal's well-established classical and folk theatre (*jatra*) are staged throughout the year by semi-professional and amateur groups. Bengali theatre is perhaps the most vibrant in the country. Its rich repertoire includes plays with historical and socially relevant themes as well as translations of

Greek, European, Sanskrit and Hindi classics. *Jatra*, on the other hand, was introduced by the Vaishnava saint, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in the 16th century and is based on musical plays that revolve around the Krishna legend (see p179). Characterized by dramatic acting interspersed with song and dance, the plays cater to both rural and urban audiences.

Another popular form of entertainment is Rabindra Sangeet. These melodious songs composed by Tagore include folk songs that are traditionally sung by boatmen who ply the Ganges. Regular concerts are held in the city, and attract audiences who continue to revere Tagore.

CLUBS AND NIGHTLIFE

Kolkata is a city of clubs which date to colonial times and are open only to members. Sometimes temporary membership can be arranged, particularly at the **Tollygunge Club** (see p699), which has huge grounds with rare trees and birds. Visitors can stay at the club, which has the comfort of a top hotel but at reasonable rates.

Kolkata's once glittering nightlife dwindled during the political upheavals of the 1960s. It is reviving now and affluent youth throng hotels where the city's nightclubs, such as **Shisha**, **Someplace Else**, **Tantra** and **Big Ben**, are situated.

DIRECTORY

SARIS AND TEXTILES

Ananda

13 Russell St

Tel (033) 2229 2275

Calcutta Carpets

43 Park St

Tel (033) 2229 9464

Good Companions

13 C, Russell St

Tel (033) 2229 0473

Kundahar

10 Dr Sarat Banerjee Rd

Tel (033) 2466 1111

Meera Bose

8, Dr Sarat Banerjee Rd

Tel (033) 2466 4043

Ritu's

111 Park St

Tel (033) 2226 2792

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Manjusha Emporium

Dakshinapan Complex,
Dhakuna

Tel (033) 2423 7099

Crafts Council of West Bengal

64 Lake Place

Tel (033) 2465 6792

Dolly's Tea Shop

G-62 Dakshinapan,

2, Ganahat (S)

Tel (033) 2483 4521

Sasha

27 Mirza Ghalib St

Tel (033) 2252 1586

BOOKS AND MUSIC

Dasgupta & Company

54/3, College St

Tel (033) 2241 4609

Music World

18 G, Park St

Tel (033) 2217 0751

Oxford Bookstore

17 Park St

Tel (033) 2229 7662

Seagull Bookstore

31 SP Mukherjee Rd

Tel (033) 2476 5869

Starmark

3, Lord Sinha Rd

Tel (033) 2282 2617

SWEETS

Balaram Mullick

2, Puddapukur Rd

Bhowanipur

Tel (033) 2475 9490

KC Das & Sons

11 Esplanade East

Tel (033) 2248 5920

Makhan Lal Das & Sons

356, Upper Chitpur Rd

Tel (033) 2555 8182

Nakur Nandy & Girish Chandra Dey

56, Ramdulal Sarkar St

Tel (033) 2241 0048

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

89 Cinemas

89 C, Maulana Abdul

Kalam Azad Saran

Tel (033) 2320 8900

Academy of Fine Arts

2, Cathedral Rd

Tel (033) 2223 4302

Birla Academy of Art and Culture

108, Southern Ave

Tel (033) 2466 2841

British Council

16, Camac St

Tel (033) 2282 5370

CIMA Gallery

Sunny Towers, Ashutosh

Chowdhury Ave

Tel (033) 2485 8717

Chitrakoot Gallery

55, Gariahat Rd

Tel (033) 2461 88 2

Fame

Metropolis Mall, Hilland

Park 925 Chak Gana

Tel (033) 2436 7744

Gorky Sadan

3 Gorky Terrace

Tel (033) 2283 2743

Nandan

11 AIC Bose Rd

Tel (033) 2223 1210

Rabindra Sadan

Cathedral Rd

Tel (033) 2223 9917

CLUBS AND NIGHTLIFE

Big Ben

The Kenilworth,

Little Russell St

Tel (033) 2282 3939

Shisha

22, Camac Street,

Block B, 5th Floor

Tel (033) 2281 1313

Someplace Else

The Park Hotel, Park St

Tel (033) 2249 9000

Tantra

The Park Hotel, Park St

Tel (033) 2249 9000

Tollygunge Club

120, Deshpriya Sasmal Rd

Tel (033) 2473 4741



WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM

West Bengal has three distinct types of landscape. In the west, the red soil gives its rich colour to the terracotta temples of Bishnupur. The Ganges Delta in lower Bengal has dense, tangled mangrove swamps where Royal Bengal tigers roam, while the charming, Raj-era hill stations of Darjeeling and Kalimpong are located in the foothills of the Himalayas in the northern part of the

state. The neighbouring state of Sikkim, which also borders Bhutan, Nepal and China, is ringed by mountains. In its tranquil valleys, richly ornamented Buddhist monasteries stand amidst emerald green terraced tea fields. The world's third highest mountain, Kanchendzonga (8,603 m/28,209 ft), dominates the skyline and the life of Sikkim's people. The two states have a combined population of 81 million.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- Bardhaman ⑤
- Gangtok ⑩
- Murshidabad ⑥
- Pelling ⑧
- Shantiniketan ⑦
- Siliguri ⑪

Historic Sites

- Chitra ⑨
- Pandua ⑫

Temples, Monasteries & Holy Places

- Belur Math ①
- Bishnupur Shyama Raya Temple ②
- Dakshineswar ③
- Tashiding Monastery ⑭

National Parks

- Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary ⑬
- The Sunderbans ④

Hill Stations & Areas of Natural Beauty

- Darjeeling ⑬
- Kalimpong ⑮
- Kurseong ⑯
- Yuksam ⑰

Rivers & Valleys

- Hooghly River ⑧

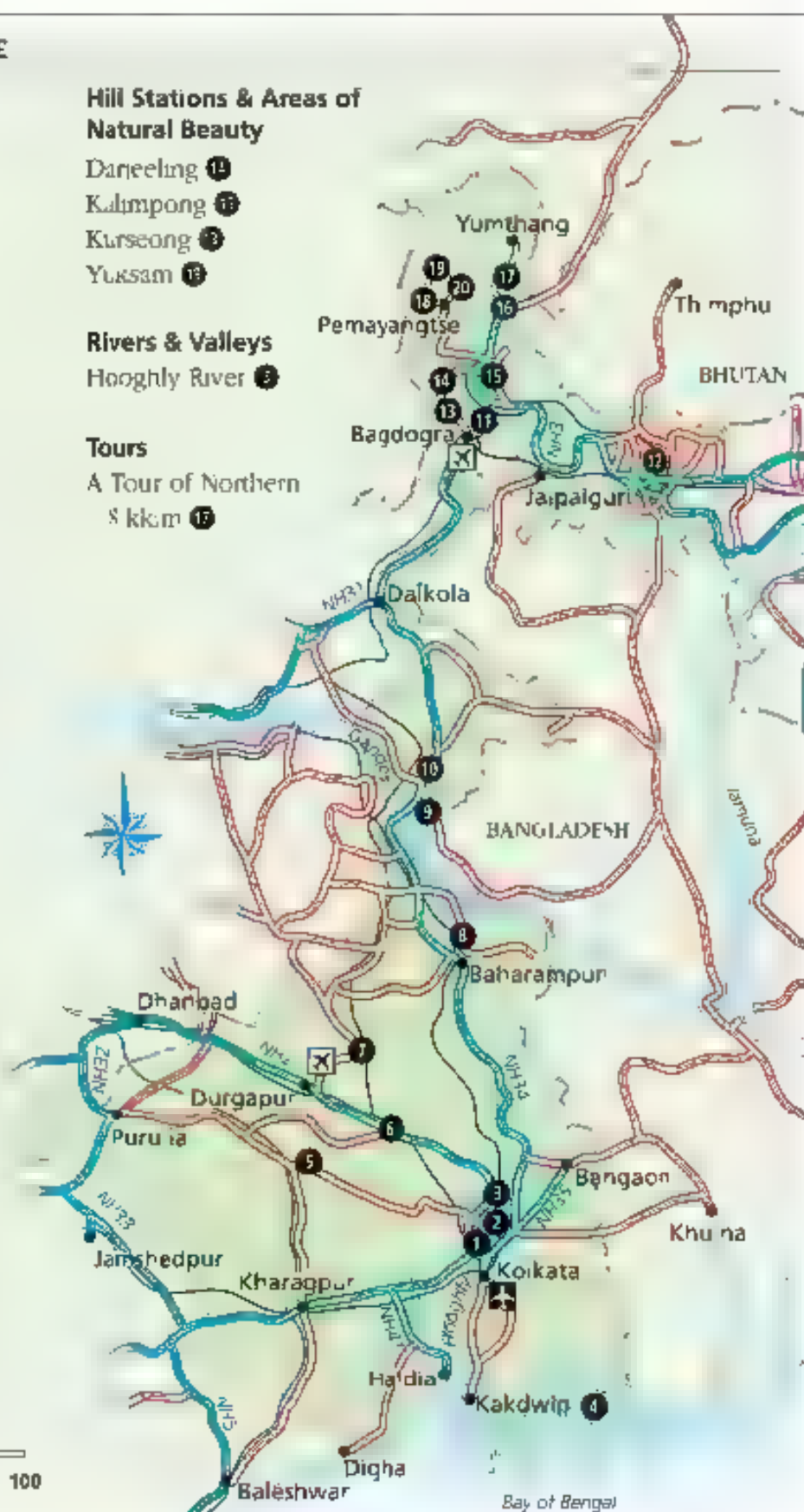
Tours

- A Tour of Northern Sikkim ⑱

KEY

- International airport
- Domestic airport
- National highway
- Major road
- Minor road
- Major railway
- International border
- State border

0 km 100
0 miles 100

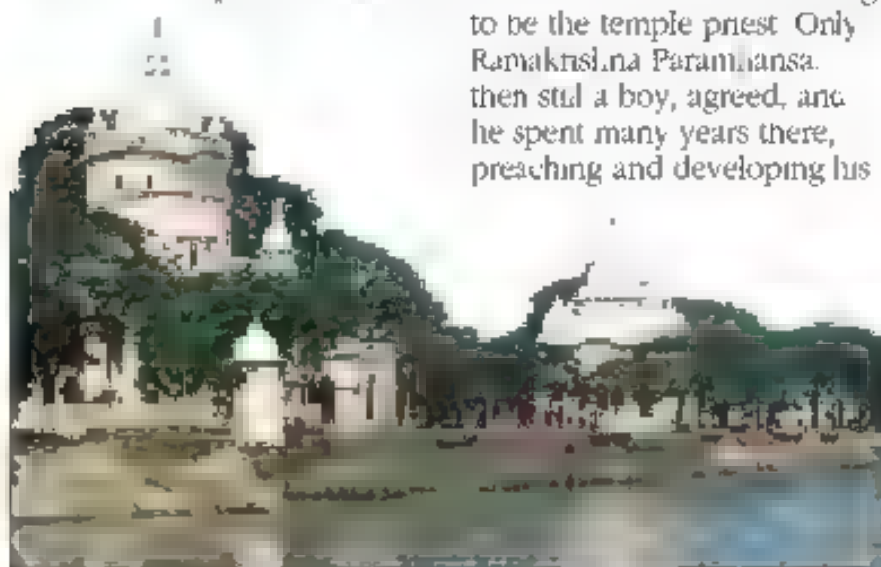


Belur Math ❶

Howrah district, 10 km (6 miles) N of Kolkata. 🚶 🚶 or taxi from Kolkata.

🕒 daily. Conservative dress appreciated.

Just outside Kolkata, on the west bank of the Hooghly river, is Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission. The order was established in 1886 by the dynamic reformist Hindu crusader, Swami Vivekananda (see p615). Ramakrishna Paramahansa's foremost disciple. The modern temple within the sprawling complex was built in 1938 and embodies Ramakrishna's philosophy, based on the unity of all faiths. The ground plan is in the shape of a cross, the windows have arches reminiscent of Mughal buildings, the gate shows Buddhist influence, and Hindu architectural motifs decorate the façade. Smaller



Belur Math, on the west bank of the Hooghly river

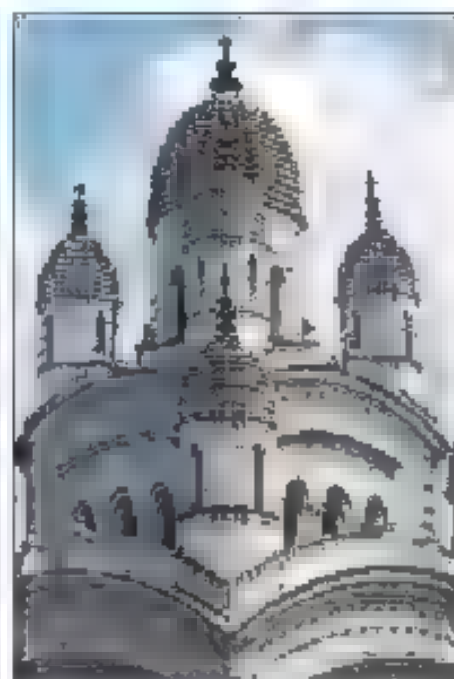
temples and dormitories for the monks belonging to the order surround it. The place is spotlessly clean, and the atmosphere contemplative and calm. Today, the Mission has centres across the world.

Dakshineshwar ❷

24 Parganas district, 12 km (8 miles) N of Kolkata. 🚶 🚶 or taxi from Kolkata. 🕒 daily. Conservative

dress appreciated.

North of Belur Math, on the east bank of the Hooghly river, stands the temple of Dakshineshwar, one of Bengal's most popular pilgrimage spots. The temple, built in 1855 by a rich and pious widow, Rani Rashmoni, was initially opposed by orthodox religious interests as she was not a Brahmin (the highest Indian caste). No Brahmin was therefore willing to be the temple priest. Only Ramakrishna Paramahansa, then still a boy, agreed, and he spent many years there, preaching and developing his



The curved bangalidar roof of the Kali temple, Dakshineshwar

philosophy of the essential oneness of all faiths. His room in the temple complex is still preserved in its original state.

The impressive whitewashed temple is set on a high plinth and topped by nine cupolas. The roof, with its line of rounded cornices, stands out impressively against the sky. Inside the sanctum is an image of Bhavani, an incarnation of the goddess Kali.

Within the large compound, strung along the river bank, are 12 smaller temples, each dedicated to the god Shiva. Crowds of pilgrims visit the Dakshineshwar temple daily, lending the sprawling temple complex a cheerful, bustling atmosphere.

Hooghly River ❸

Hooghly district, 24 km (15 miles)

N from Kolkata to Shirampur. 🚶

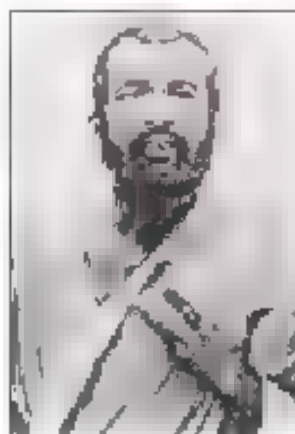
🚶 🚶 River cruises. 🏠 Babu Ghat (near Eden Gardens, or Tourist Office, 1033) 2248 7302.

When the Ganges enters the lower Gangetic Plains in West Bengal, the river breaks up into many channels. The main distributary, the Hooghly (now Hugli), flows 260 km (162 miles) from Murshidabad to the Bay of Bengal.

Between the 15th and 19th centuries, this easily navigable river attracted Dutch, French, Portuguese, Danish and British traders. The settlements they established transformed the

RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHANSA (1836–86)

Ramakrishna, one of modern India's greatest spiritual teachers, was born into a poor family of priests in 1836. He became a priest at Dakshineshwar, where he began a life of prayer and meditation. His philosophy was lucid: there is an inherent truth in all religions and a simple life is a pure life. A mystic who claimed to speak directly to God, he could explain complex and abstruse theological issues in the simplest language, which appealed to the poor and rich alike. His teachings were carried to the USA and to Britain by his main disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), who set up many Ramakrishna Mission centres abroad for education and religious studies.



Ramakrishna Paramahansa



Visitors praying at the Church of Our Lady of Bandel

river banks into a mini Europe – the remnants of which can be best explored today by taking one of the river cruises.

Up river from Kolkata is **Shrirampur** (Serampore), a Danish colony until 1845. Dr William Carey, the first Baptist missionary in India (see p.279), set up the earliest printing press here in 1799 and translated the Bible into several Indian languages, including Bengali, marking the beginnings of modern Bengali prose. He also founded the first theological college today, Shrirampur College, in 1805. Its library houses a priceless collection of 18th- and 19th-century books.

On the east bank is **Barakpur** (Barrackpore), the site of the British viceroys' once gracious country house. The mansion, locally referred to as Lat Bagan ("Governor's or Lord's Garden"), was built by Lord Wellesley, the governor general in the early 19th century.

Chandannagar (Chandernagore), a French settlement from 1673 until 1952, still retains a Gallic ambience. The public benches on the waterfront (previously Quai Duplex) are replicas of those found in Paris parks. The elegant Administrator's Residence, built in the 18th century, is now the Institut de Chandernagore, a library and



Armenian Church, Chinsurah

museum and contains an interesting collection of French-era documents and artifacts. The Église du Sacré Coeur has a statue of Joan of Arc and a Lourdes grotto.

North of Chandannagar is **Chinsurah** (Chunchura), an Armenian settlement, taken over by the Dutch in 1625 and later by the British. The Armenian Church was built in 1697, though the steeple was added a century later. The town of **Hooghly** to the north has an impressive *minaret* (mosque) built in 1836. Further upriver is **Bandel**, founded by the Portuguese in 1580. The Church of Our Lady of Bandel, consecrated

in 1599, is the oldest in Eastern India. After being refaced in granite, it has however, lost some of its charm. People of all faiths still pray at the statue of Our Lady of Happy Voyages, an icon with an interesting history. In 1632, while the city was being sacked by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, the icon was lost in the river, but later reappeared miraculously on the banks in front of the church.

Further north is **Bansberia**, site of several terracotta temples. The Ananta Vasudeva Temple, built in 1679, has a panel of warriors carved above the entrance, while the Hanseshwari Temple, built in 1811, has a fabulous array of Kremlin-like onion domes and an elaborately carved façade.

THE HOOGLY RIVER

KEY

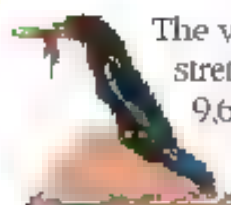
- Railway station
- Bus station
- Temple
- Church
- Jetty

0 km 5
0 miles 5



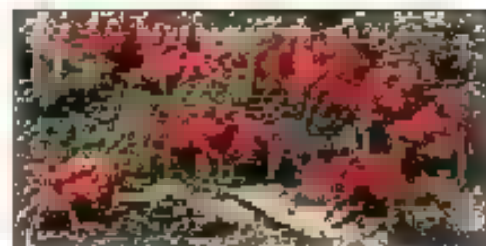
The French Administrator's Residence in Chandannagar

The Sunderbans ④



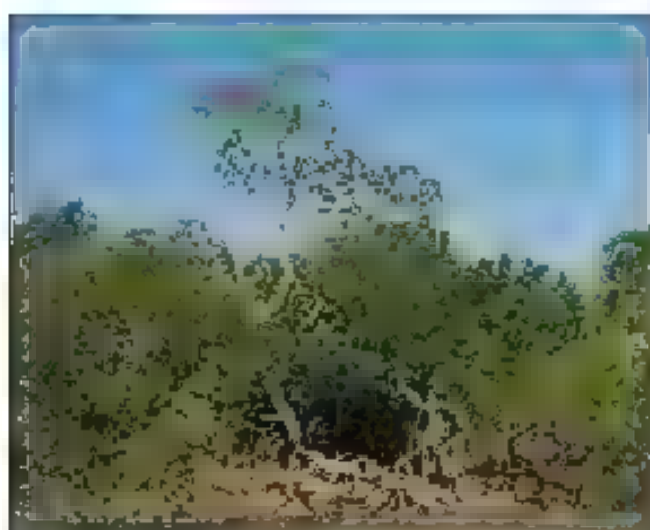
White breasted
kingfisher

The vast Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta stretching into Bangladesh, covers 9,630 sq km (3,718 sq miles) and has the world's largest tropical mangrove forest. The Sunderbans Reserve, which spreads across 2,585 sq km (998 sq miles) created within the delta was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1973 to protect the endangered Royal Bengal tiger. A part of the reserve houses the Sundarbans National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site covering 1,330 sq km (513 sq miles). The intricate network of waterways, creeks and alluvial islands abounds in a variety of marine life, including crustaceans and dolphins, as well as reptiles such as Olive Ridley turtles and estuarine crocodiles. Birds such as the waterfowl, can be seen here. Guided boats are available.



Fiddler Crabs

Male fiddler crabs have a large claw, resembling a bow and fiddle which they use to attract females and deter enemies.



Mangrove Forests

Renowned for their variety of mangroves, the Sunderbans were once dominated by the sundari tree (*Heritiera fomes*) now nearly extinct due to rampant timber poaching. Mangroves have ingeniously adapted to flooding and salinity, using breathing roots or pneumatophores.



Country Boats

Small rowboats, available from Sajnakhal, take visitors along the reserve's many waterways. These craft are preferable to the noisier motorboats that tend to scare away wildlife, especially the rich variety of waterfowl.



MORE TO SEE

The western boundary of the Sunderbans boasts a number of popular beaches and reserves, all of which can be reached by road or boat. **Ganga Sagar** on Sagar Island is the spot where millions of pilgrims gather for the annual Ganga Sagar Mela (see p295) during Makar Sankranti in January. **Diamond Harbour** is a popular picnic spot, while **Bakkhali** and **Digha** have beautiful beaches and are popular resorts. Bakkhali is also a haven for bird life.



Estuarine or Saltwater Crocodile

Saltwater crocodiles, known as *salties*, grow up to a length of 8 m (26 ft). They feed on small mammals and have occasionally been known to attack humans.



KEY

- Railway station
- Bus station
- Jetty
- Tourist information
- Accommodation
- Viewpoint
- Major road
- Minor road
- Park boundary
- International border

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

24 Parganas district 168 km 104 miles) SE of Kolkata Canning, 45 km (28 miles) NW of Sajnakhal, the entry point to the Tiger Reserve Basanti, 30 km 19 miles, NW of Sajnakhal. from Canning or Basanti via Gosaba to Sajnakhal. For bookings contact the Field Director, (03218) 255 280. Permits are available at the Tourist Dept, Kolkata, (033) 2248 7302 Nov-Mar compulsory Rowboats with boatmen are available from Sajnakhal.



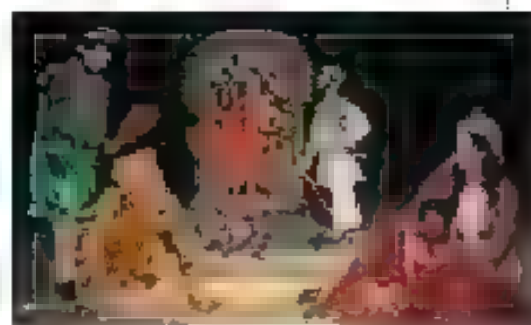
Royal Bengal Tiger

The Indian stretch of the Sunderbans has 245 Royal Bengal tigers. They are the only tigers known to live in mangrove forests and have adapted remarkably to the inhospitable environment. Expert swimmers, they feed on fish, and are even believed to survive on salt water.

0 km 10
0 miles 10

TALE OF THE TIGER

The tiger plays a major role in India's cultural history as a symbol of power and kingship. In Hindu iconography Shiva wears a tiger skin, while the fearsome Goddess Durga rides a tiger. Tiger images can also be seen in vibrant murals in Buddhist monasteries in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. In the Sunderbans, ritual offerings are made to the forest deity Banbibi, to seek protection from the tiger. Yet statistics belie the tiger's mythic status. In 1900, India's tiger population was about 40,000; by 1972 it had fallen to 1,800. Aarmed, the Indian government launched Project Tiger. Ever since, numbers have grown substantially and India now has between 2,750 and 3,500 tigers (about 60 per cent of the world's tiger population) protected in 28 Project Tiger Reserves across the country.



A play re-enacting Banbibi protecting a mother and child from the tiger

Bishnupur: Shyama Raya Temple 5



Creeping
motif

Bishnupur capital of the Malabhami kingdom between the 17th and the mid-18th centuries, is renowned for its elaborately adorned terracotta temples, made of the local red clay. The most imposing of these is the Shyama Raya Temple, built in 1643. It is richly decorated with scenes from Lord Krishna's life as well as episodes taken from the epic *Ramayana* (see p27). Other motifs in the temple include scenes of hunting, boating and military processions.



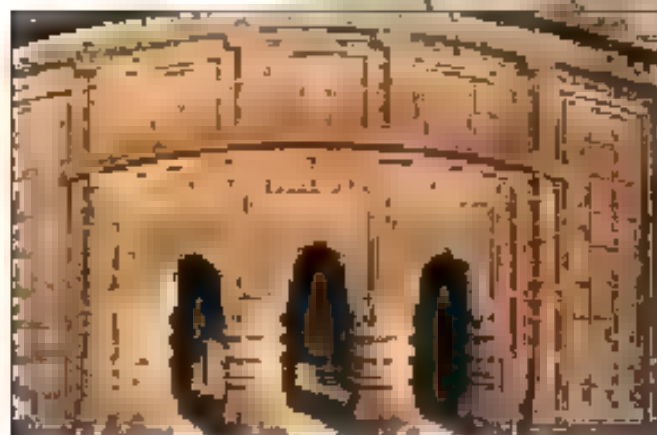
Front façade of the Shyama Raya Temple



Shikharas

The design of the five spires is inspired by the temple tradition of nearby Orissa (see p306).

The cornice echoes the contours of thatched village huts.



Arched Façade

The arches, supported by squat ornamented pillars, lead to a vaulted corridor.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp700-1 and pp728-9

The inner chamber, called *thakurhari* (god's house), has a finely decorated altar at one end.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bankura district 152 km
(94 miles) NW of Kolkata

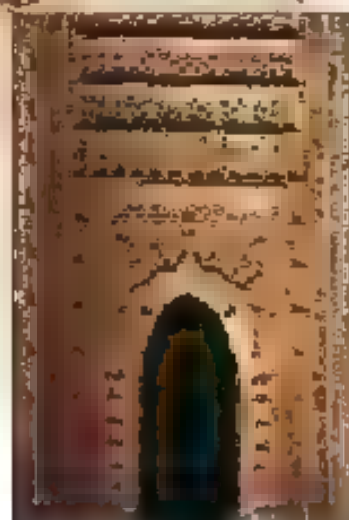
☎ 128,811 🚗 🚶 🏠 daily

🏠 Rasa Festival (Aug)



Terracotta Friezes
Scenes from the epics alternate with scenes from daily life. Here Krishna plays his flute for the gopis (milkmaids).

The curved cornice
deflects rain water



Interior Arch
This doorway has rich carvings of creepers, foliage and flowers



The twin hut-like roofs of the Keshta Raya Temple, Bishnupur

Exploring Bishnupur's Temples

The terracotta temples of Bishnupur are scattered over a 3-km (2-mile) radius and stand out vividly against the vibrant green and ochre colours of the landscape.

The **Rasa Mancha Temple**, built by the ruler Bir Hambir in the late 16th century, has 108 pillars and a pyramidal roof. Images of Krishna and Radha were displayed here for the Rasa Festival, a tradition that still continues today.

North of the Rasa Mancha Temple is the large **Keshta Raya (Jor Bangla) Temple**, built in 1655. It has joined twin roofs, literally *jor bangla*. Floral motifs, scroll work and scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* embellish the friezes on the walls.

The **Madan Mohan Temple** further north, was built in 1694 and has friezes showing events from the life of Krishna.

To the northwest, the 19th-century **Shridhara Temple** has nine spires or *nai ratna*. The frieze at the entrance shows the god Shiva dancing.

Bardhaman ⑤

Bardhaman district 125 km (78 miles) NW of Kolkata. 🚗

🏠 Bardhaman Festival (Jan)

The Rajas of Bardhaman (Burdwan) were once powerful landlords and great patrons of the arts. Today, the small, nondescript town is a gateway to some interesting sites. The rajas built several temples at **Kalna**, 50 km (31 miles) to the east, in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Shiva temple, with 108 minor shrines, is the most impressive. **Nabadwip**, 20 km (12 miles) to the north, was the birthplace of Sri Chaitanya (1486–1533), founder of the movement that revived the Krishna cult (see p179). It is a charming town, with a few old houses built of the narrow red brick, unique to pre-British Bengal. Pilgrims singing *kirtans* throng the Gauranga Temple. Nearby in **Mayapur**, is the large and modern Chandrodaya Temple, headquarters of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness).

BANKURA HORSES

Bankura district's vibrant tradition of folk art includes a variety of clay handicrafts. The district's most famous product is the Bankura horse, a very stylized figure with a long neck and elongated ears, in warm terracotta colours. Artisans have used the same techniques of hollow clay moulding and firing for generations. Sizes vary from minute palm-sized toys to gigantic creations over 1 m (3 ft) high. The horses are votive figures and are usually placed in front of local deities.



Bankura clay horse



Students attending open air classes at Visva Bharati University

Shantiniketan ❶

Birbhum district 213 km (132 miles) NW of Kolkata. Bolpur, 3 km (2 miles) S of Shantiniketan, then rickshaw Bolpur. Kendulimela (Jan), Poush Mela (Dec).

Rabindranath Tagore founded the serene settlement of Shantiniketan in 1921. His aim was to establish an institution that followed the traditional Indian *gurukul* system of instruction where gurus would teach their disciples while sitting on the grass under shady trees. The university also stressed the importance of community living, and specialized in all branches of the arts and humanities, with a special emphasis on Bengali culture.

Today known as the **Visva Bharati University**, its structure is more conventional, but certain traditions, such as open air lessons, remain sacrosanct. The place is still hallowed ground for admirers of Tagore.

In the campus is the Uttarayan Complex, where the poet lived and worked for many years. Other departments include **Kala** (Fine Arts), **Bhavan**, **Sangeet** (Music), **Bhavan** and **China Bhavan**, specializing in Chinese studies. Shantiniketan's association with contemporary Indian art is evident by the works on display by many of the country's leading artists, such as Binode Bihari Mukherjee (1904–80), Nandalal Bose (1882–1966) and Ram Kinkar

Bar (1910–80). The **Vichitra Museum** has memorabilia from the poet's life, including his paintings, developed from the sketches he made in the margins of his written work. Excellent performances of Rabindra Sangeet (songs written and set to music by Tagore) can be heard at the campus every evening.

The village of **Kenduli** nearby, is the birthplace of the medieval poet Jayadeva, who composed the *Gita Govinda*, a paean to Krishna. Every year in January the **Baais**, wandering minstrels known for their soulful songs, gather here for Kendulimela, a festival where they sing without pause for three days.

Visva Bharati University
Tel 03463, 25 2531 Thu–Tue
 Vichitra Museum
 daily

Murshidabad ❷

Murshidabad district 200 km (124 miles) N of Kolkata.

The former capital of the nawabs of Bengal, Murshidabad lies in the green and gold Bengal countryside. This city, on the banks of the Bhagirathi river, was founded in 1704 by Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, governor of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. His grave lies beneath the stairs of the impressive **Katra Mosque**, built in 1724 along the lines of Kartaab Khan's Mosque at Dhaka. The nawab chose this site because he wanted the footsteps of the faithful to pass over him.

Hazarduari ("A Thousand Doors"), the nawabs' palace, was built in the 1830s by General Duncan McLeod of the Bengal Engineers who,



The grand façade of Hazarduari Palace in Murshidabad

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861–1941)





Tagore was India's ultimate Renaissance man and his influence is still felt in all branches of the arts, particularly in Bengal. Born in 1861 into the rich and cultivated Tagore family (see p280), he became a poet, lyricist, novelist, short story writer, essayist, painter, choreographer, actor, dramatist and singer – as well as the author of India's national anthem. Following the translation of his poem *Gitanjali* into English by WB Yeats, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913. He was knighted by the British government, but returned the honour in protest against the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh (see p56). Mahatma Gandhi called him Gurudev ("Great Teacher"). Tagore died in August 1941 but his memory is still deeply revered by Bengalis and his portraits, if not his books, occupy pride of place in nearly all middle-class Bengali homes.






Nobel laureate Tagore, in 1930

inspired by Italian Baroque, gave it a banquet hall lined with mirrors and a striking circular Darbar Hall. The palace is now a museum with many fine exhibits, such as a gigantic chandelier, presented by Queen Victoria, which was hung directly over the nawab's solid silver throne. The library has over 10,000 books, among them some beautiful illuminated Korans. Other items on display are a motley collection of arms and armour, including a cannon which was fired at the crucial Battle of Plassey in 1757 (see p52), when Robert Clive defeated the nawab, Siraj-ud-Daulah – a battle which eventually paved the way for the establishment of the British Empire in India. The town declined after Kolkata grew in importance.

Hazarduari Museum

 Sat–Thu.   

Gaur 9

Malda district, 325 km (202 miles) N of Kolkata  Malda, 16 km (10 miles) N of Gaur, then taxi or bus.  **Monuments**  daily

The impressive ruins of Gaur are an indication of its former glory when the city caught the imagination of the second Mughal emperor Humayun who called it *Iminatahad* ("Abode of Paradise"). This abandoned city spread over 52 sq kms (20 sq miles), dates to the 15th and 16th centuries, though the area has a much older history. The Buddhist Pala kings ruled here from the 8th century onwards until they

were ousted by the Senas, Bengal's last Hindu dynasty, in the 12th century. Thereafter, it was ruled by a series of Muslim sultans, including the Ilyas Shah dynasty. Gaur was sacked by Sher Shah Suri (see p79) in 1539, and ravaged by plague in 1575 after which it became part of the Mughal Empire.

The oldest structure is the **Sagar Dighi**, a large tank built in the 12th century. On the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi river are the ramparts of a fort, within which is a brick wall that once enclosed a palace. The northern gate, the **Dakhil Darwaza**, built in 1459, has a soaring entrance archway and corners embellished with carving. To its north are the remains of **Sona Mosque** built in 1526, and Gaur's largest mosque. Other interesting buildings include the many-arched **Qadam Rasul Mosque**, built in 1530 to enshrine an impression of the Prophet Mohammad's footprint, the brick **Tantipara Mosque**

and the **Lattan Mosque** with remnants of blue, green, yellow and white tiles. The **Gumti Darwaza**, the eastern entrance to the city of Gaur, still stands.

Pandua 10

Malda district, 360 km (224 miles) N of Kolkata  Malda, 18 km (11 miles) S of Pandua, then taxi or bus. 

The creeper-covered ruins of Pandua lie on either side of a 10-km (6-mile) stretch of an old paved brick road. In 1353, Pandua replaced Gaur as the capital of Bengal's Muslim rulers. At the northern end, the 14th-century **Adina Mosque**, built by Sultan Sikandar Shah, imitates the design of the great

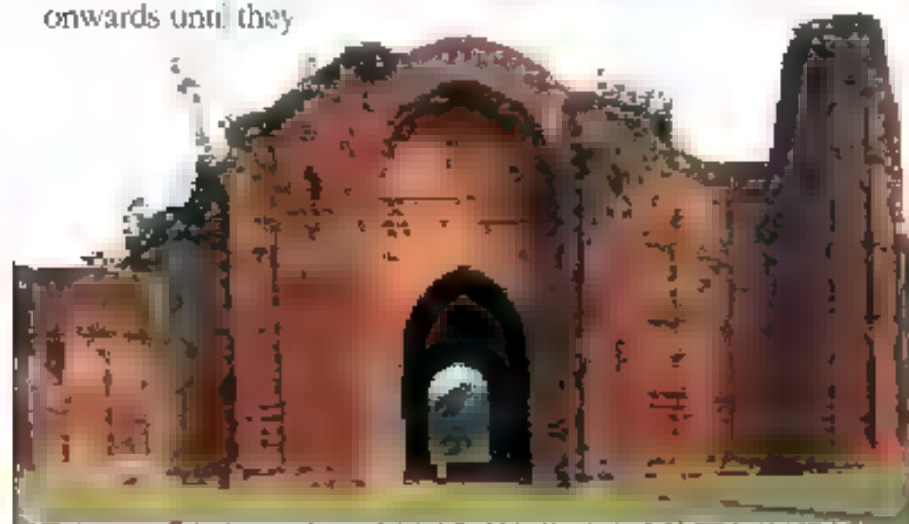
mosque at Damascus. Once the largest mosque in India, it contains Sikandar Shah's tomb. Further south is the early 15th-century **Eklakhi Mausoleum** which contains the grave of Sultan Jalal-ud-din. This structure, built at great cost, was one of the earliest square brick tombs to be constructed in Bengal. The octagonal inner chamber, unusually, has an image of Ganesha, the Hindu elephant god, carved over the entrance archway. The **Qutb Shahi Mosque**, to the south, is sometimes called the "Golden Mosque" as its minarets were once topped with yellow tiles. It was built in 1582 by Sultan Mahmud Shah, whose grave lies adjacent to the mosque.



The carved terracotta façade of the Eklakhi Mausoleum, Pandua



The Gumti Darwaza, Gaur



The Dakhil Darwaza in Gaur, built with small, red bricks



Tea plantations lining the road between Bagdogra and Siliguri

Siliguri ①

Daneeling district 79 km (49 miles), SE of Daneeling ② 470,300.

✈ Bagdogra, 12 km (7 miles), W of Jilqun, then taxi or bus. ② New Jalpaiguri, 60 km (37 miles), SE of Siliguri, then taxi or bus. ③ ④ ⑤ Tourist Office, Siliguri, (0353) 251 974

Siliguri, situated in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas, was once a calm, provincial town with quiet streets and well-equipped shops where tea planters would come to stock up on provisions. Today much of the town is a vast trucking depot though it has some lively bazars, such as the one on **Tenzing Norgay Road**. The

Tibetan woollens on sale here are good bargains, and cane furniture, a speciality of the area, is widely available. In the winter Siliguri hosts international Buddhist conferences and also serves as the transit point for travellers to the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary.

Environ

Clustered close to Siliguri are **New Jalpaiguri**, the railhead for the area, and **Bagdogra** which has the airport. Along with Siliguri, these towns act as gateways to the hill stations of Daneeling, Kurseong and Kampong, as well as to Bhutan and Sikkim. The drive between these towns goes past beautiful green acres of tea plantations.

Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary ②

Jalpaiguri district 200 km (124 miles) E of Siliguri ③ Madanhat, the entry point, then taxi ④ Madanhat ⑤ For general enquiries and bookings for the **Hollong Forest Lodge** contact Tourist Office, Siliguri, (0353) 251 1974 ⑥ Oct-May ⑦ ⑧ extra charges. ⑨ Hollong.

The region around the **Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary**, in the richly forested Dooars Valley, was once the hunting ground of the kings of Bhutan. Today it is one of the biggest reserve forests in West Bengal, covering an area of 216 sq km (83 sq miles). Established in 1941,

THE DARJEELING HIMALAYAN RAILWAY (DHR)

The most attractive way to travel to Daneeling from Siliguri is by the "toy train" officially known as the **Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR)**. The narrow gauge train gasps its way up from the railhead at New Jalpaiguri to Daneeling, 2,128 m (6,982 ft) above sea level. The journey takes nine hours and the track rises a total of 2,088 m (6,850 ft) over its length of 80 km (50 miles). Constructed between 1879 and 1881, the train line was hailed as an engineering



The toy train pulled by steam engines

masterpiece and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The line makes wide loops as it zigzags up the hill, requiring the train to backtrack for certain stretches. Each of the steam engines, one of which dates to 1892, hauls up three carriages. If nine hours sounds daunting, try journeying to Kurseong by train and taking a bus to Daneeling, or travelling only the last stretch (from Ghoom to Daneeling) by train. Tickets for the journey are available at New Jalpaiguri and Daneeling stations. The train leaves both stations at 9am and 3pm during the peak season. For more details see p 777.

the reserve sprawls over lush, deciduous forests and dense scrubland, with the Torsa river flowing through it. This is one of the few places in India where the great Indian one-horned rhinoceros (see p330) can be easily spotted. About 50 of these magnificent animals live in the sanctuary, protected from poachers who hunt them for their horns, which are believed to be powerful aphrodisiacs. The sanctuary is home to various other rare and endangered species as well, including the leopard, tiger, hispid hare, hogbanger, and sloth bear.

Large numbers of hog deer, spotted deer, barking deer and gaur (Indian bison) can also be seen at Jaldapara. Bird species include the lesser pied hornbill, and the Bengal florican with its mottled and streaked plumage. In addition, there are eight species of freshwater turtles in Jaldapara's ponds.

The northern part of the sanctuary, known as Totopara, is located along the banks of the Torsa river. It is home to the Toto tribe, now only 950 strong, whose members have consistently refused to succumb to the comforts of civilization.

A delightful way to explore the Jaldapara Sanctuary is to take an early morning elephant safari through the park. The elephants belong to the forest department and spend their entire lives within the confines of the sanctuary. Quite often, the elephants taking visitors on safaris are

accompanied by their calves, which gambol along closely beside them. The many waterholes in the sanctuary where animals come to drink in the evenings, are excellent spots for wildlife sightings.

The elegant, colonial-style **Hollong Forest Lodge** within the sanctuary offers food and accommodation.

Kurseong 13

Darjeeling district 31 km (19 miles)
N of Siliguri.  

Halfway between Siliguri and Darjeeling on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway line, secluded Kurseong has a quiet charm. It is smaller than Darjeeling, with a milder climate because of its lower altitude. Set amid tea gardens, with lush vegetation and a picturesque lake, Kurseong

is known for its natural beauty. According to local legend, the place gets its name from *kurson-rip*, a beautiful wild orchid found in the area.

Kurseong is a walkers' paradise. The trek from Mirik to Kurseong (see p303), which takes about eight hours, runs through tea estates, orange orchards, cardamom plantations and small villages, and provides spectacular views of the valley. Similarly, the five-hour walk to **Ghoom** is also beautiful, winding along a ridge which runs through a thick, but well-shaded, forest



Jungle fowl, found in large numbers at Jaldapara



Gaur (Indian bison) roaming the scrubland at Jaldapara

FESTIVALS OF WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM



Saraswati Puja pandal

Ganga Sagar Mela (mid-Jan). Sagar Island. Thousands of pilgrims assemble for a fair, and a dip at dawn at the point where the Ganges enters the sea.

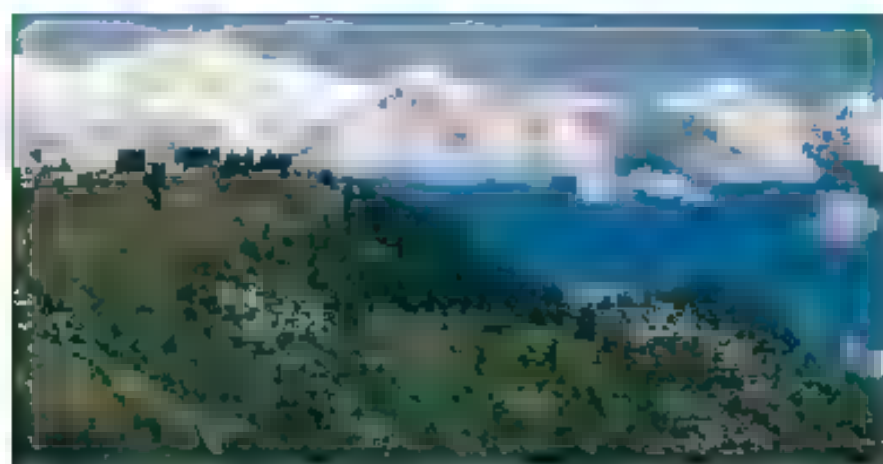
Saraswati Puja (Jan/Feb). Saraswati is the Goddess of Learning and her image is always dressed in pale yellow. School and college girls dress in yellow too, and place their books at the feet of the goddess during this festival, celebrated all over Bengal.

International Flower Festival (Apr/May), Gangtok. Held at the height of the flowering season, this festival showcases Sikkim's rare orchids, rhododendrons and other beautiful flowers.

Saga Dawa (May), Gangtok. Sacred scriptures are carried from monasteries through the streets by stately processions of lamas during this festival, which celebrates the Buddha's birth, his enlightenment and his attainment of nirvana.

Durga Puja (Sep/Oct) (see p281).

Burra Din (25 Dec), Kolkata. Otherwise known as Christmas, Burra Din is celebrated by Christians and non-Christians alike. Kolkata's main shopping streets are lit up and little plastic pine trees, decorations and thickly iced fruit cakes are on sale at every local market.



A view of Darjeeling with Mount Kanchendzonga in the background

Darjeeling 16

Darjeeling district, 79 km (49 miles) NW of Siliguri 107 600 Bagdogra, 90 km (56 miles) S of city centre, then bus or taxi Government Tourist Office, Chowrasta, (0354) 225 4050.

The name Darjeeling derives from the monastery of Dorge Ling (meaning Place of the Thunderbolt) that once stood on Observatory Hill. The British chose this sunny, west-facing ledge of the Himalayan foothills to build a sanatorium in the mid-19th century. Subsequently, it became Bengal's summer capital and the government would move up here when the plains grew too hot. Today, much of Darjeeling's Raj splendour is still in evidence and contrasts with its Tibetan, Nepali and Bengali character.

This picturesque town squats rather precariously on the 'L' side and has three main thoroughfares: **Hill Cart Road**, **Laden Road** and **The Mall**. The Mall is the hub of Darjeeling, leading to the crowded **Chowrasta** (cross-roads), lined with bookshops such as the **Oxford Book and Stationery** which has a wide range of books on India. Other shops sell teas, curios and souvenirs. Vendors offer sets of bright, out-of-focus postcards and guided tours. A rather jolting ten-minute pony ride round the Chowrasta is also available.

Nearby is the **Bhutia Busty Monastery**, built in 1879. The cult text, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, was found in the library attached to this shrine and was translated into English in 1927. The murals in the

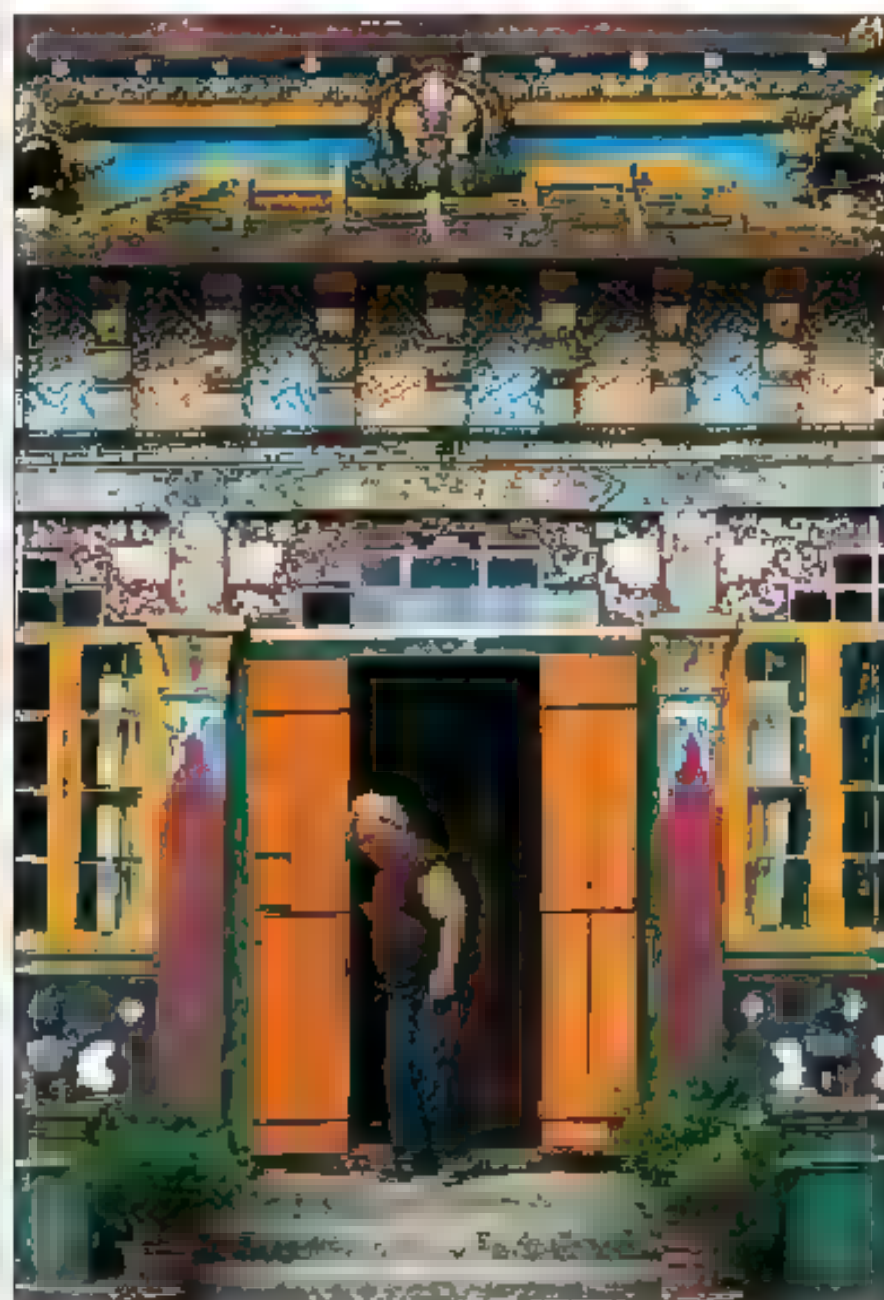
temple are beautiful – but visitors should ask for permission before entering.

The presence of **Kanchendzonga** (8,598 m/28,209 ft) India's highest peak (see p 362), dominates the town. Some of the best views of the entire snow-clad range of the Eastern Himalayan peaks can be enjoyed from the windy, prayer flag-lined **Observatory Hill**.

At **North Point**, in the northwest corner of Darjeeling,

is India's first passenger ropeway – a cable car connecting Darjeeling to **Singla Bazaar** in the Little Rangeet Valley. The hour-long journey provides a good view of the mountains and the tea gardens that cling to the sides and bottom of the valley.

The **Himalayan Mountaineering Institute** is to the south of North Point on Birch Hill. Its Mountaineering Museum has a fascinating contour model of the Himalayan peaks, while the Everest Museum gives a history of the various attempts to climb Everest and other Himalayan peaks. The **Himalayan Zoo** is adjacent and is famous for its high altitude fauna, including snow leopards, Siberian tigers and red pandas. To the south, the **Lloyds Botanical Gardens** are home to an interesting and varied collection of Himalayan flora – the hundreds of species of orchids in its Orchid House



The carved and painted façade of the Yiga Choeling Monastery

are particularly lovely. The town also has some well-preserved colonial churches. **St Andrew's Church**, west of Observatory Hill, was built in 1843, though the clock tower was added later. **St Columba's Kirk**, near the train station, was built in 1894 and is worth a visit for its magnificent stained-glass windows.




Some of the best preserved examples of Raj-era grandeur in India are Darjeeling's hotels and clubs. Just above Observatory Hill is the rattan-and-chintz-decorated




Windamere Hotel (see p 700). Open fires heat the sedate lounge where, to the accompaniment of a string quartet playing genteel tunes, maids in starched aprons serve sandwiches and Darjeeling tea to visitors and guests.

Ghosts of colonial planters can be sensed at the **Planters' Club**. Old hunting prints hang on the walls and visitors can sit in front of coal fires while hearers, who must have been robust young men in 1947, serve drinks in slow motion.

 **Bhutia Busty Monastery**
Chowrasta.  daily

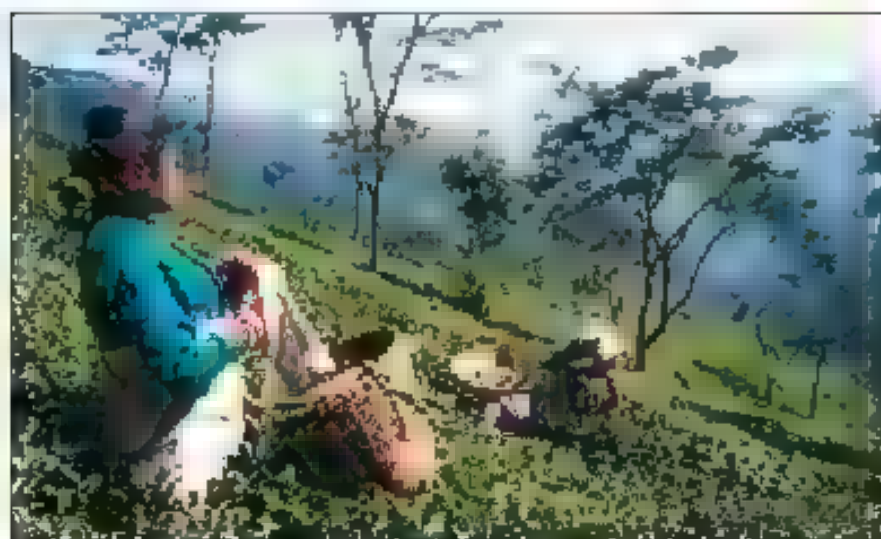
 **Himalayan Mountaineering Institute**

Birch Hill Park, entrance on Jawahar Rd West. Tel (0354) 225 4268.  daily.  Thu.  extra charges.

 **Himalayan Zoo**
 Fr-Wed. 

Environs

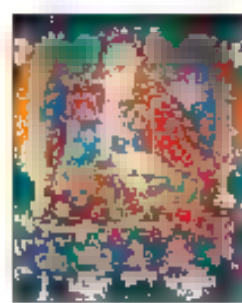
Those interested in Buddhism should visit the **Yiga Choeling Monastery**, 10 km (6 miles) south of Darjeeling, established in 1875 by the Gelagpa (Yellow Hat) sect. The monastery has murals of Buddhist deities and beautiful, if faded, frescoes in the prayer hall. Ask for permission before entering the shrine. **Tiger Hill**, 11 km (7 miles) south of Darjeeling, offers spectacular views of the mighty **Everest** (8,848 m/29,029 ft) and other peaks in the Eastern Himalayan Range, including **Makalu** (8,415 m/27,605 ft) and **Jannu** (7,710 m/25,295 ft), as they catch the first rays of the sun. Early risers can take a pre-dawn drive to Tiger Hill (about 45 minutes in a jeep).



Women tea pickers in northern Bengal's tea gardens, around Darjeeling

Senchal Lake, 5 km (3 miles) west of Tiger Hill, is a lovely mountain lake, but tends to be crowded with local tourists. For visitors who come to Darjeeling during the plucking season (April to November) the **Happy Valley Tea Estate**, just beyond the town, is a pleasant tea garden to visit.

 **Yiga Choeling Monastery**
daily. Donations welcome



Mural, Zangdopelri Fo-Brang Monastery

route to Tibet and still has the feel of a frontier town. Its market sells a mix of the exotic and the mundane, from fern shoots to plastic buckets. Memories of the Raj are recalled by the charming stone cottages and the quaint ambience of the **Himalayan Hotel** (see p 700) once a family home.

The **Thongsa Monastery** is Kalimpong's oldest monastery. It was built in 1692, and is a brisk hour's walk above the town. To the south of the town, the **Zangdopelri Fo-Brang Monastery**, blessed by the Dalai Lama in 1976, has some interesting three-dimensional mandalas.

The town's many nurseries produce a large number of exotic orchids, gladioli, amaryllis lily and cactus. A good one to visit is the **Udai Mani Pradhan Nursery**.

Kalimpong 15

Darjeeling district. 51 km (32 miles) E of Darjeeling.  43,000. 

Kalimpong was once part of Sikkimese and then Bhutanese territory before it became part of British India in the 19th century. It was at the head of the ancient trade

TENZING NORGAY (1914-86)

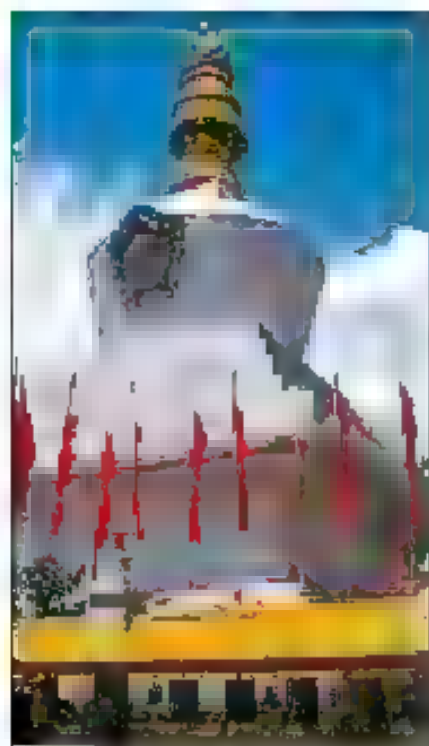


Statue of Tenzing, Himalayan Mountaineering Institute

Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary were the first two men to stand on top of Mount Everest. Tenzing Norgay was born in Tsa-chu, Nepal, into the Sherpa community, and later made his home in Darjeeling. He undertook his first climb as a porter with a British expedition in 1935 and climbed many mountain peaks, making at least six attempts on Everest before his successful one with Hillary in 1953, when he was the sherpa sirdar (head sherpa). Tenzing won the George Medal and later became the head of Darjeeling's

Himalayan Mountaineering Institute.

Tenzing's life highlighted the contributions, earlier seldom acknowledged, that sherpas make to Himalayan expeditions.



Stupa at Gangtok's Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

Gangtok 16

East Sikkim district, 110 km (68 miles), N of Siliguri 29,200 Bagdogra, 117 km (73 miles), S of city centre, then taxi or bus. Siliguri, 107 km (66 miles), S of city centre, then taxi or bus. Sikkim Tourism, MG Marg, (03592) 221 634. Losar Festival (Feb/Mar), Enchey Monastery Festival (Aug & Dec). **Travel permits** required to enter Sikkim (see p303).

The capital of Sikkim, Gangtok, reflects this tiny state's extraordinary ethnic diversity. In the crowded city, which spills precariously down a ridge, Lepchas (the region's original inhabitants) live alongside Tibetans, Bhutias, Nepalis and Indians from the plains. Though now full of modern structures, Gangtok's "Shangri-la" aspects can still be experienced in pockets of the city and in its alpine environs.

Until 1975, Sikkim was a kingdom, with the status of an Indian Protectorate. It was ruled by the Chogyals, Buddhists of Tibetan origin, whose dynasty began in the 17th century. However, the British Raj's policies of importing cheap labour from neighbouring Nepal for Sikkim's rice, cardamom and tea plantations drastically changed Sikkim's demography. Soon, Nepali Hindus constituted 75 per cent of the state's population. In 1975, the population of Sikkim voted to join the Indian

Republic, ending the rule of Palden Thondup Namgyal, the last Chogyal.

At the town's northern edge is the early 20th-century **Enchey Monastery**, whose large prayer hall is full of murals and images representing the pantheon of Mahayana Buddhist deities (see p141). Enchey's festivals feature spectacular masked dances. At the southern end is the **Namgyal Institute of Tibetology**. Established in 1958, it has a rare collection of medieval Buddhist scriptures, bronzes and embroidered *thangkas*.

Enchey Monastery

daily only allowed outside the monastery

Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

Mon-Sat 2nd Sat & public hols. www.tibetology.com

Environ

Saramsa Orchidarium, situated 14 km (9 miles) south of Gangtok, displays many of the 450 orchid species found in Sikkim. They flower from April to May, and again in October.

Rumtek Monastery

24 km (15 miles) southwest of Gangtok, is the headquarters of the Kagyupa (Black Hat) sect, one of the oldest Tibetan Buddhist sects, and the seat of its head, the Gyalwa Karmapa. The 16th Karmapa fled Tibet in 1959 after the Chinese invasion, and built a replica here of his monastery at Tsurphu.



Guardian of the East at Rumtek

in Tibet. Rumtek is an impressive complex, its flat-roofed buildings topped with golden finials, and filled with treasures brought from the monastery in Tibet. Especially splendid is the reliquary *chorten* of the 16th Karmapa, behind the main prayer hall, made of silver and gold and studded with corals, amber and turquoise. Since the 16th Karmapa's death in 1981, however, there have been two claimants to his title (and the monastery's legendary treasures), including one who dramatically escaped from Tibet into India in 2000. Until this dispute is resolved, the armed guards that surround the monastery will remain. Rumtek's main festivals are in February/March and in May/June. **Tshangu Lake**, 40 km (25 miles) northeast of Gangtok, lies at an altitude of 3,780 m (12,402 ft). Visitors to the lake require a special permit from the Sikkim Tourism office in Gangtok.

The drive to Tshangu Lake, close to the border with China, is spectacular. The lake is impressive both in spring and summer, when it is surrounded by a pine forest, and in winter when it is frozen. Visitors can go for rides on the shaggy black yaks that stand docilely on the lake's shores.

Rumtek Monastery

Tel (03592) 252 329 daily only allowed outside the monastery www.rumtek.org



The richly decorated prayer hall of Rumtek Monastery

Flora and Fauna of the Eastern Himalayas

The Eastern Himalayas and their foothills in northern Bengal, Sikkim and the north-eastern states are exceptionally rich in rare flora and fauna. This region receives the brunt of the Southwest Monsoon winds as they rise over the Bay of Bengal and hit the Eastern Himalayas with full force gradually losing impetus as they travel westward. The resulting high moisture content in the air and soil has helped create a habitat



Primula calderina

of dense virgin forests, fertile hillsides and lush alpine pastures. Among the plants that can be seen in this region are over 50 species of rhododendron, 500 species of orchid and several varieties of primula and bamboo. Typical fauna of the region include yaks, blue sheep and red pandas. Local folklore adds another – the elusive Yeti or Abominable Snowman glimpsed by many mountaineers.

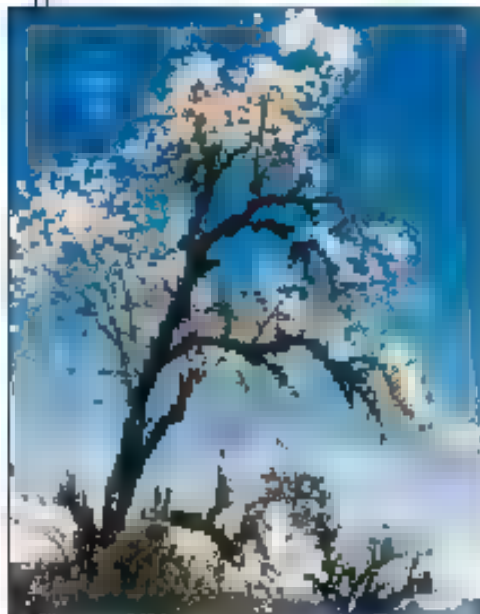
The blue poppy (*Meconopsis roylei*), which attracted famous 19th-century plant hunters such as Joseph Hooker to the Eastern Himalayas, grows above the tree-line in alpine pastures where yaks graze.



The cardiocrinum lily (*Cardiocrinum giganteum*) is highly scented. It grows in temperate forests of oak, maple and rhododendron in Sikkim.



Orchids, such as this beautiful yellow *Dendrobium* species, festoon the forests of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland and Sikkim.



Magnolia campbelli with its lovely white blossom blooms profusely in early spring in the temperate forests of the Darjeeling hills and Sikkim.



The great pied hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) with its huge yellow and black beak, is common in the forests of Arunachal Pradesh where several tribes sport its black and white feathers in their headdress.



The red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) also called the cat-bear, is a bright chestnut colour with white-rimmed ears and a rusky tail. One of its favourite foods is dwarf bamboo which grows in the temperate forests of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.



The yak is greatly prized in Sikkim. It serves as a pack animal, and also provides milk, meat and wool from its shaggy coat.

A Tour of Northern Sikkim 17

An area of unspoilt natural beauty framed by snowcapped Himalayan peaks, northern Sikkim has only recently been opened to visitors. This tour, following the valley of the Teesta river, goes past tranquil monasteries and villages through forests of rhododendron to Yumthang where yaks graze in meadows filled with alpine flowers. Along the way there are charming rural markets and superb views of the world's third highest peak, Mount Kanchendzonga.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

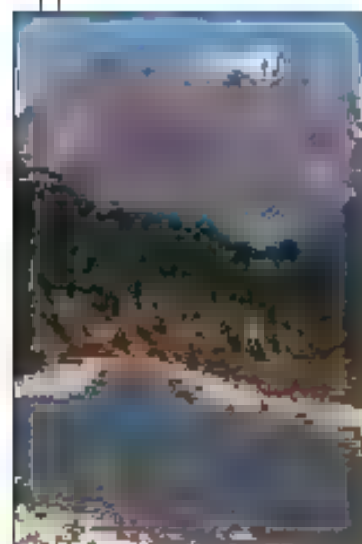
Length: 49 km (31 miles)

Stopping-off points: The tour can be done in 2-3 days

Phodong, Mangan-Singhik and Lachung are stopping-off points

Permits: visitors require special permits for this region, issued by the Department of Tourism in Gangtok, (03592) 221 634

Travel is permitted in groups of two or more persons. For more details see p303



Yumthang ⑥

The Lachung-Yumthang road crosses rhododendron forests, which bloom between April and June. It is at 3,614 m (11,857 ft) and also has hot sulphur springs.

Lachung ⑤

Just 15 km (9 miles) from Tibet, with which it used to trade before 1959.

Lachung is a pretty village on both banks of the Lachung river.



KEY

- Tour route
- National highway
- Minor road

Mangan-Singhik ④

This market centre for northern Sikkim attracts local villagers selling oranges, apples and cardamom. There are breathtaking views of the Kanchendzonga Range from here.

Chungthang



Phodong ②

This serene monastery with 260 resident monks has beautiful murals, woodcarving and Buddhist images. It was built in 1740.

Labrang ③

This monastery (built 1710), 4 km (2.5 miles) from Phodong, has an unusual octagonal shape. On the track below it are the ruins of Tumong Palace, the seat of the Chogyas in the 19th century.

Gangtok ①

Built on a high ridge above the Rangpo river, Gangtok (see p298) is a bustling town at an altitude of 1,780 m (5,840 ft).



Pelling 18

West Sikkim district, 120 km (75 miles) W of Gangtok Gezing, 9 km (6 miles) S of city centre, then local bus or taxi. Mount Pandim, Pemayangtse, (03595) 250 573 Pemayangtse Festival (Feb/Mar). **Travel permits** required (see p303).

Situated on a ridge at an altitude of 2,860 m (6,800 ft), with excellent views of the peaks and glaciers of the Kanchendzonga Range, Pelling is a fast growing town. With plenty of accommodation, it is a convenient base from which to explore western Sikkim and embark on treks (see pp302–303). This is the state's most beautiful and unspoilt region, with expanses of forest, green river valleys, superb trekking trails, and Sikkim's oldest monasteries. Pelling is a day's drive from Gangtok, and is accessible from Darjeeling (72 km, 45 miles south).

The main attraction here is the monastic complex of **Pemayangtse**, built in 1705, on a ridge a half-hour's walk from the town. Surrounded by picturesque monks' quarters and outhouses, the austere three-storeyed main monastery is a treasure house of beautiful *thangkas*, murals and images, with a breathtakingly intricate model of Zangdopelri, the seven-storeyed celestial home of Guru Padmasambhava (see p139), on the top floor. Pemayangtse has an annual festival, with spectacular masked dances. Sikkim's second oldest monastery, **Sangachoeling**

(built in 1697) is a steep 40-minute hike through thick forests above Pemayangtse. It has exquisite murals. The ruins of Sikkim's 17th-century capital, built by the second Chogyal (see p298), are at **Rabdentse**, 3 km (2 miles) south of Pelling.

Environs

Khecheopalri Lake, 33 km (21 miles) north of Pelling, is an enchanting spot which is sacred to both Buddhists and Hindus.

who come here to make a wish. Seen from above, the lake is shaped like the footprint of Buddha. Though surrounded by a forest, it does not have a single leaf floating on its surface, and according to local belief, a holy bird swoops down and removes each leaf as it falls on the water.

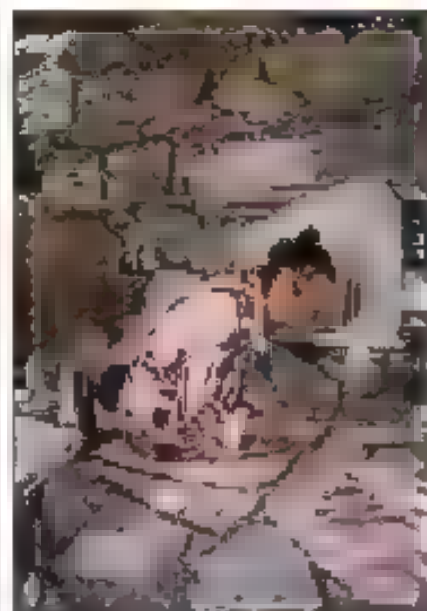


Detail of a door, Pemayangtse

Yuksam 19

West Sikkim district, 162 km (101 miles) W of Gangtok Mount Pandim, Pemayangtse, (03595) 250 573 **Travel permits** required (see p303).

Yuksam was the first capital of Sikkim, where the first Chogyal of Sikkim was crowned in 1641 by three learned lamas. A stone throne and some *chortens* mark this historic spot. Below it is **Kathok Lake**, and **Dubdi Monastery** built in 1701, with its exquisite Buddhist images and meditation cave, is a steep half-hour climb above Yuksam. It is the starting point for the trek to Dzongri (see p302).



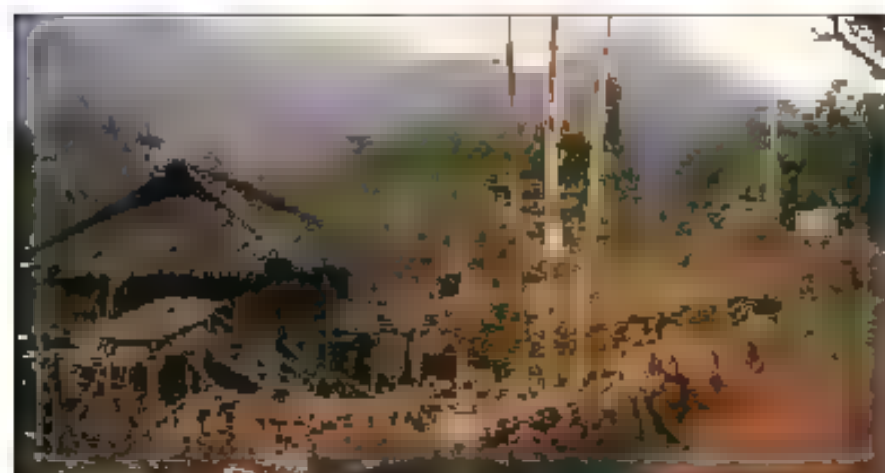
Mani stones being carved at Tashiding Monastery

Tashiding Monastery 20

West Sikkim district, 145 km (90 miles) W of Gangtok daily Bumchu Festival (Feb/Mar). **Travel permits** required (see p303).

Built in 1716, Tashiding Monastery stands on the summit of a heart-shaped hill, where Guru Padmasambhava is said to have shot an arrow and then meditated on the spot where it fell. Surrounded by *chortens*, mani stones, water-driven prayer wheels, and the Ratong and Rangeet rivers, with Mount Kanchendzonga looming behind the hill, this is a magical spot. During the annual Bumchu Festival it attracts large crowds from all over Sikkim.

During this festival, sacred water, said to have been put into a sealed jar by a 17th-century Buddhist saint, is mixed with river water and distributed as a powerful blessing to devotees. Miraculously, the supply of sacred water never runs dry and each year when the jar is unsealed, oracle priests can predict the future of Sikkim from the water level in it – too much or too little water augurs ill for Sikkim's peace and prosperity. Tashiding also has the **Thongwa Rangdol Chorten**, a mere gumpse of which is supposed to wipe away all sins. The main temple, rebuilt in 1987, has large images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas.



Prayer flags fluttering near Yuksam, the first capital of Sikkim

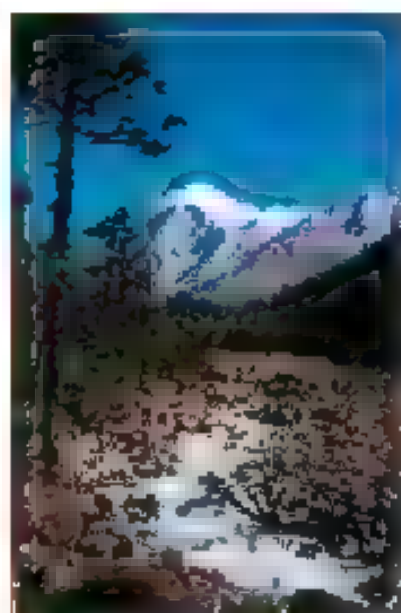
Trekking in West Bengal & Sikkim



Rhododendron blossoms

The eastern Himalayas, spanning Tibet, Nepal, West Bengal and Sikkim, have some of the world's highest peaks such as Kanchendzonga, Everest, Lhotse and Makalu, and offer a variety of trekking options amidst lush hills bursting with orchids and rhododendron blossoms. The region is also alive with legends of the Abominable Snowman or Yeti, a huge, ape-like creature, who allegedly lives above the snowline. West Bengal's most popular trails are centred around the

Singalila Ridge near Darjeeling, with views of Nepal's great massifs, while most of Sikkim's trails are dominated by the mighty Kanchendzonga. The best seasons are between October and November, and February and May.



The Singalila Ridge

The Singalila Ridge, which begins near Darjeeling and extends to Kanchendzonga, has several trails. The Sandakphu-Phalut route beginning at Maneybhanjan has spectacular views of Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Kanchendzonga, with plenty of lodges along the way. The 60-km (37-mile) path ends at the roadhead at Rimbik.

Duration: 6 days

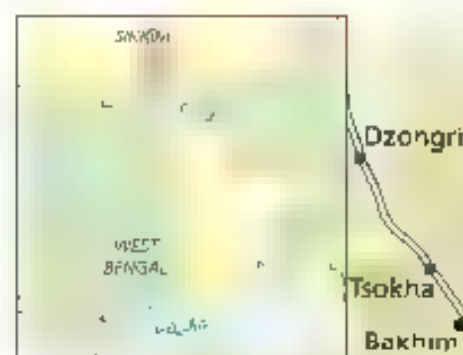
Altitude: 3,636 m (11,929 ft)

Level of difficulty: moderate

MOUNT KANCHENDZONGA

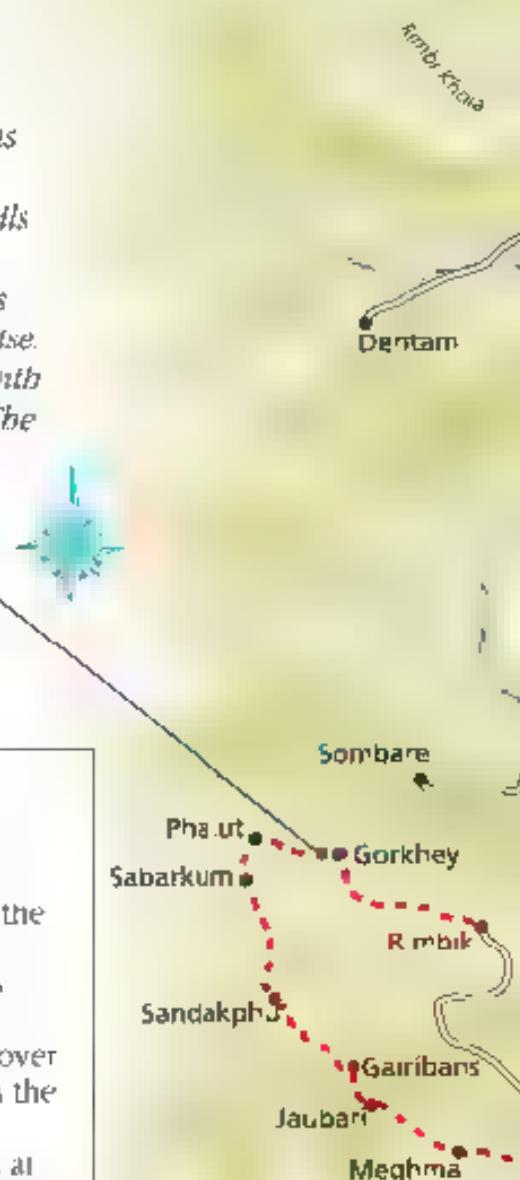
Mount Kanchendzonga, the third highest peak in the world at 8,598 m (28,209 ft), dominates the skyline of Sikkim and West Bengal's Darjeeling district. Its name means "Five Treasures of the Snows", and the Sikkimese believe that the five summits of the Kanchendzonga Range conceal four treasures – gold and gems, grain, silver and holy scriptures. This magnificent mountain is revered as the guardian deity of Sikkim and is worshipped all over the state during the Pang Lhabso festival, which takes place in the seventh month of the Tibetan calendar (between August and September). Prayers, rituals and masked dances are performed at

monasteries – with the mass f represented by a red mask crowned with skulls – to ensure that the land is protected in the year to come. Such is the awe in which the Sikkimese hold the peak that in 1999, an Austrian expedition to scale it was cancelled after widespread public protest that this would dishonour the deity and bring catastrophe to Sikkim.



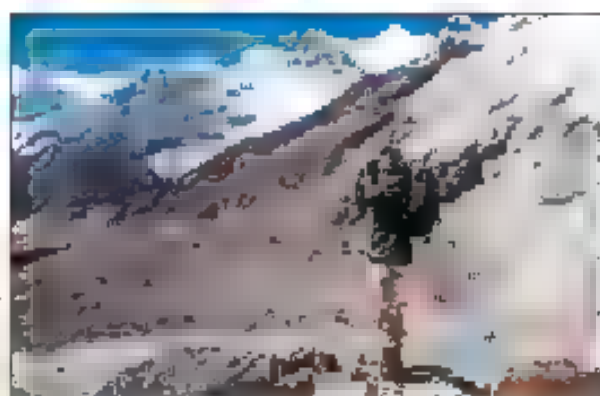
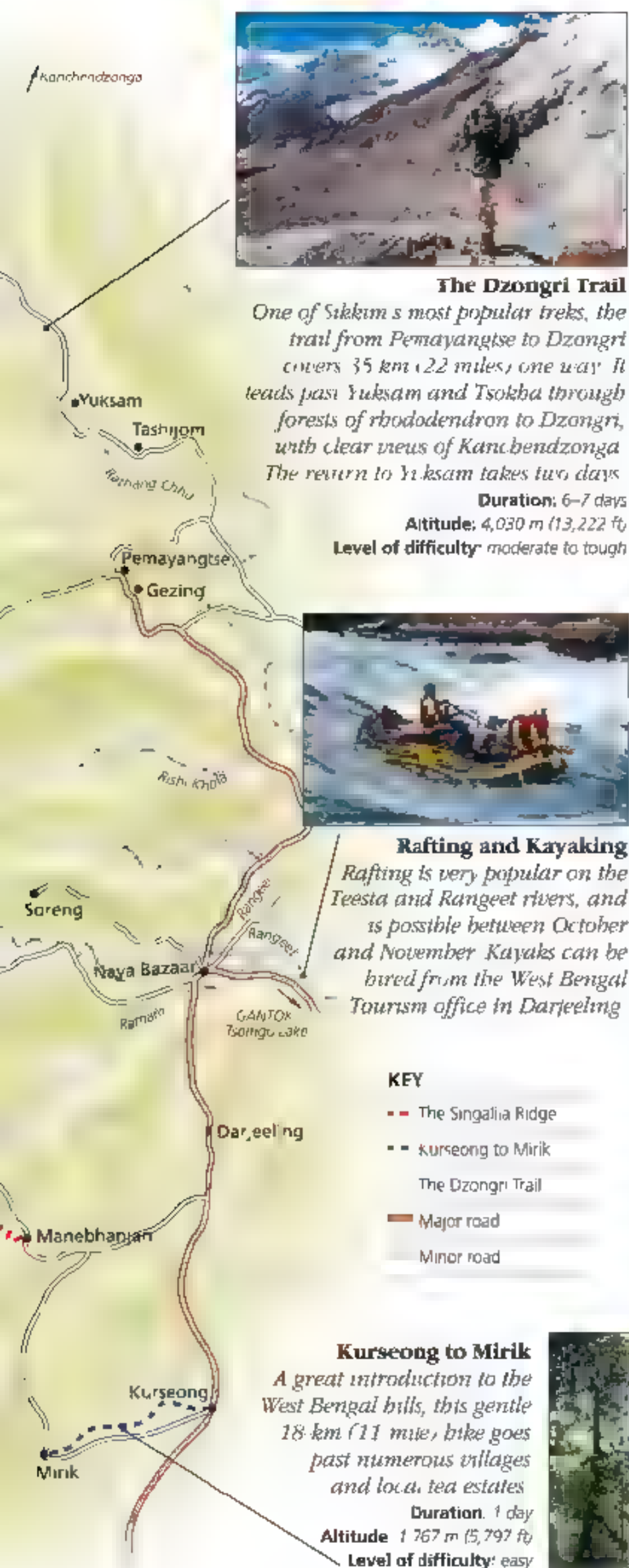
LOCATOR MAP

□ Area shown below



A panoramic view of Mount Kanchendzonga from Dzongri Peak

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0 miles 5



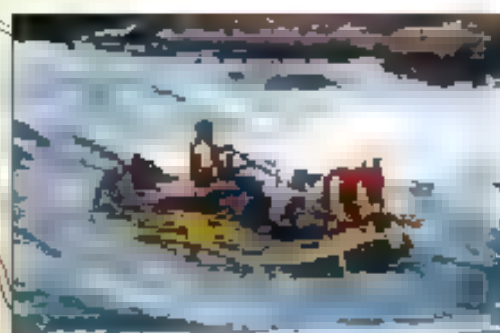
The Dzongri Trail

One of Sikkim's most popular treks, the trail from Pemayangtse to Dzongri covers 35 km (22 miles) one way. It leads past Yuksam and Tsokha through forests of rhododendron to Dzongri, with clear views of Kanchendzonga. The return to Yuksam takes two days.

Duration: 6–7 days

Altitude: 4,030 m (13,222 ft)

Level of difficulty: moderate to tough



Rafting and Kayaking

Rafting is very popular on the Teesta and Rangeet rivers, and is possible between October and November. Kayaks can be hired from the West Bengal Tourism office in Darjeeling.

KEY

- The Singalila Ridge
- - - Kurseong to Mirik
- The Dzongri Trail
- Major road
- Minor road

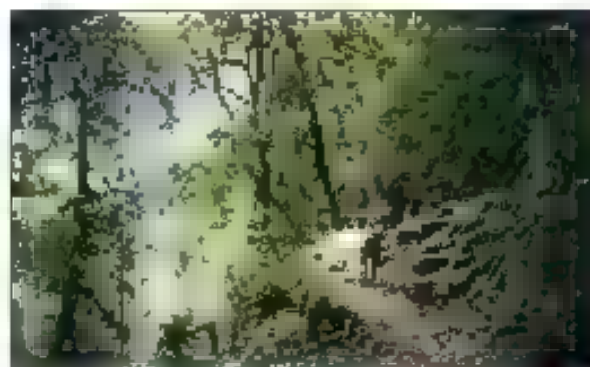
Kurseong to Mirik

A great introduction to the West Bengal hills, this gentle 18-km (11-mile) bike goes past numerous villages and local tea estates.

Duration: 1 day

Altitude: 1,767 m (5,797 ft)

Level of difficulty: easy



PRACTICAL TIPS

Be prepared: Acclimatization is essential for altitudes over 3,000 m (9,843 ft). See p767 for information on altitude sickness. Guides and porters can be hired in Gangtok and Darjeeling. The region is hit hard by the monsoon and trekking between early June and late September is not advisable. For more details on trekking see p751.

On the trek: Sikkim's trekking trails have suffered deforestation and littering, so ensure that all litter is carried back with you. Drink plenty of water and carry a first aid kit and cooking fuel. Never burn wood, which is a scarce resource. Put out all fires properly, leaving no burning embers. Some trails have leeches (see p767), so carry salt which, when sprinkled on a leech, causes it to fall off.

Permits: Foreign visitors require travel permits for Sikkim, issued for a 15-day period from the District Magistrate's Office in Darjeeling, (0354, 225 4233, or the Sikkim Tourism offices in Delhi, (011, 2611 5346, Kolkata, (033) 2281 5328, and Siliguri, (0353, 221 6502. A 14-day extension is permitted, issued by the Department of Tourism in Gangtok, (03592, 221 634, who also issue special permits for restricted areas such as Dzongri, Yumthang and Tsomgo Lake. Travel to these areas is permitted in groups of two or more persons. Trekking permits for Sikkim are available from the Department of Tourism in Gangtok, and Sikkim Tourism in Delhi. All treks must be arranged by a registered agency. For general information see p758.

Equipment hire & operators: Himalayan Adventures in Darjeeling, (0354, 225 4004, and Sikkim Trekking and Tours in Gangtok, (03592) 203 638, are reputed agencies. For more details see p755.



ORISSA

Bounded on the west by the thickly forested hills of the Eastern Ghats, and on the east by nearly 500 km (311 m.les) of coastline on the Bay of Bengal, Orissa covers an area of 156,000 sq km (60,232 sq m.les). Its most famous sights are clustered together in a compact triangle on the eastern coast, in the fertile delta of its major river, the Mahanadi. These include the magnificent 13th-century Sun Temple at Konark, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and other outstanding temples at Bhubaneswar and Puri. To recover from sightseeing fatigue, there are

beaches within easy reach at Puri, Konark and Gopalpur-on-Sea, fringed by coconut groves and fishing villages. Just south of this triangle is Chilka Lake, Asia's largest lagoon and a paradise for birdwatchers. The hinterland of the coast is lush with green paddy fields, dotted with ancient Buddhist ruins and tranquil hamlets, where Orissa's beautiful traditional crafts flourish. The spectacular, unspoilt landscape of northern Orissa includes Simlipal National Park, with its wealth of wildlife, and settlements of tribal people who form nearly a quarter of Orissa's population of 35 million.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

Baleshwar ⑪
Banpada ⑫
Berhampur ⑤
Bhubaneswar ①
Cuttack ⑥
Puri ②

Historic Sites

Konark ③
Ratnagiri ④

Areas of Natural Beauty

Chilka Lake ④
Gopalpur-on-Sea ⑤
Taptapani ⑦

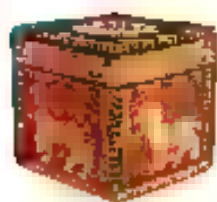
National Parks

Bhitarkanika Sanctuary ⑩
Simlipal National Park ⑧

0 km 100
0 miles 100



Bhubaneswar 1



Painted dowry box from Orissa

The capital of Orissa, Bhubaneswar is famous for its superb Hindu temples. Most of these are in the older, southern part of the city, while the new town, with its modern administrative buildings and wide tree-lined avenues, is in the north. The temples date from the 7th to the 13th centuries, a period which saw the waning of Buddhism and a revival of Hinduism under the successive dynasties that ruled Orissa: the Shalodbhavas and Bhauma Karas in the 7th–8th centuries; the Somavamshis in the 9th–11th centuries, and the Eastern Gangas in the 12th–13th centuries.

Exploring the temples

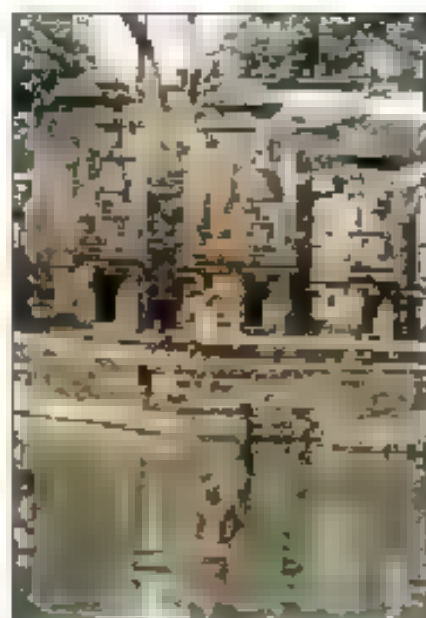
More than 400 temples remain of the 7,000 that are said to have once embellished Bhubaneswar, earning it the title, the "City of Temples". A distinctive version of the North Indian style of temple architecture evolved in Orissa over the centuries (see p21), under the patronage of the different dynasties. As the power and prosperity of these dynasties grew, the temples became bigger and more elaborate. Most of the temples have two main components – a convex curvilinear spire, locally known as the *deul* (elsewhere called the *shikhara*), which towers over the inner sanctum where the deity's image is kept, and an entrance porch or assembly hall called the *jagamohan*, with a stepped pyramidal roof. Some of the bigger temples have two or three of these porches. Several smaller shrines and bathing tanks often surround the main temple, which is enclosed in a walled compound.

The magnificent 11th-century **Lingaraj Temple** represents the high point of the Orissan style, where both sculpture and architecture have evolved in perfect harmony. Its grandeur lies in its towering 55-m (180-ft) high *deul* (spire) with dramatic vertical ribs, and in the consummate artistry with which each sculpture and embellishment is executed. The female figures, animals, and friezes of ceremonial processions are full of grace and exuberance. The temple's large courtyard has more than 100 smaller shrines. The main deity here is Shiva as Trilinga-vaneswar ("Lord of the Three Worlds"), from which the city takes its name. The intriguing image of a rampant lion springing on a crouching elephant is a powerful motif in this temple, as in many others in Orissa, and some scholars believe it is a royal emblem. Non-Hindus cannot enter the Lingaraj Temple, but can view it from a platform near its northern gateway. The other temples are open to visitors.



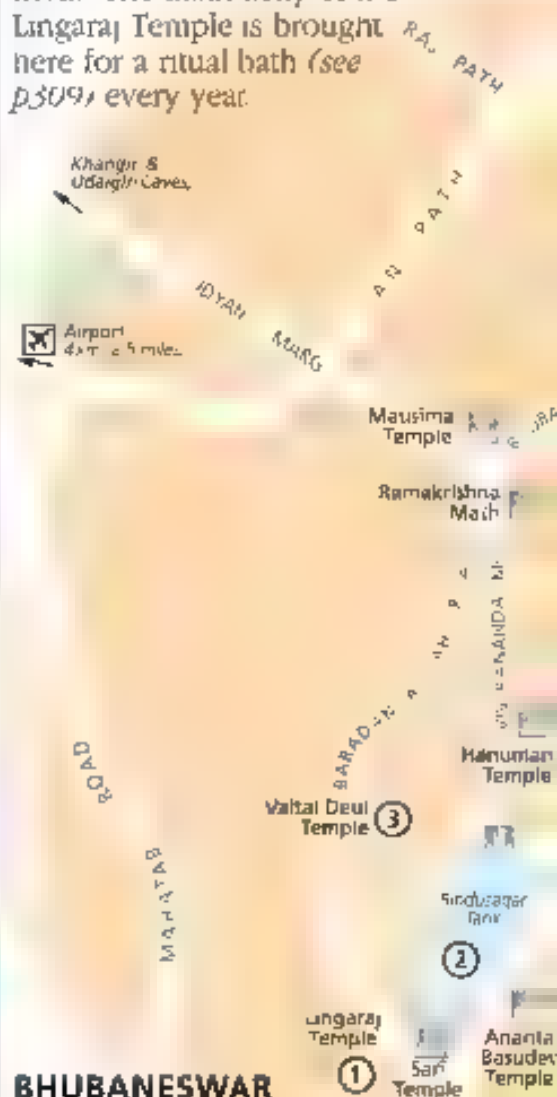
The impressive spire of the 11th-century Lingaraj Temple

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p701 and pp729–30



Devotees bathing in the sacred waters of Bindusagar

North of the temple is the large **Bindusagar Tank** with a pavilion in the middle. It is believed to contain water from every sacred river in India. The main deity of the Lingaraj Temple is brought here for a ritual bath (see p309) every year.



BHUBANESWAR CITY CENTRE

- Bindusagar Tank ②
- Lingaraj Temple ①
- Mukteshwar Temple ③
- Orissa State Museum ②
- Parasurameshwar Temple ④
- Rajarani Temple ⑥
- Vaital Deul Temple ③

Key to Symbols see back flap





The 8th-century **Vaital Deul Temple**, to the west of Bindu-sagar, is an unusual temple with dense interior carvings. These indicate that it was probably used for macabre tantric rites including human sacrifice. The main deity here is a terrifying, eight armed Chamunda (a form of Durga), with a garland of skulls, seated on a corpse, flanked by a jackal and an owl.

Built in the 7th-century, the **Parasurameshwar Temple** on the road to Puri is the best preserved and most lavishly sculpted of the earliest group of temples. The square-

towered shrine has a rectangular *jagamohan* adjoining it, decorated with wonderfully animated bands of dancers and musicians on its west windows. The main entrance to the *jagamohan* also has a fine carving of domestic elephants capturing wild ones to the left of the lintel. Set into the outer walls of the shrine are images of deities, among them a superb potbelied Ganesha and his brother Kartikeya sitting on his vehicle, the peacock.

The nearby 10th-century **Mukteshwar Temple** one of the jewels of Orissan temple architecture, is notable for its exquisite sculptures and elegant proportions. Its beautiful *torana* (gateway) is decorated with languorously reclining female figures. The *jagamohan* is illuminated by diamond-shaped latticed windows on the north and south walls, their outermost frames depicting enchanting scenes of frolicking monkeys. A unique feature of the *jagamohan* is the decorated ceiling, carved into a lotus with eight petals. The sculptures of female figures in this temple are remarkable for their expressive faces, with hairstyles and jewellery shown in exquisite detail. The octagonal wall surrounding the temple has a number of niches, each containing a

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bhubaneswar district, 480 km (298 miles), S of Kolkata
 647 350 4 km (2.9 miles);
 NW of city centre   
 Orissa Tourism BJB Nagar, (0674) 2432 1 77  Tribal Mela Jan, Ashokashtami (Mar/Apr)

wheel, a lotus medallion or a delicate scroll.



Set amidst paddy fields, just off the main road, is the 11th-century **Rajarani Temple**. It has a particularly striking spire decorated with miniature replicas of itself

rising in continuous tiers around the tower. This temple is renowned for its fine sculptures of *dikpals* (the guardians of the eight cardinal directions) perched on lotus flowers. Of these Agni, the God of Fire on a ram, and Varuna, God of the Oceans seated

on a crocodile are particularly impressive. Also remarkable are the tall and slender female figures, carved in high relief on the walls of the temple.

Orissa State Museum

BJB Nagar  Tue-Sun




 public toilet 

The highlight of this interesting museum is its rich collection of Buddhist and Jain sculptures, coins, and painted palm-leaf manuscripts. There are also collections of tribal art, traditional jewellery and musical instruments.

Environs

The **Nandan Kanan Zoo** and botanical gardens, 16 km (10 miles) north of Bhubaneswar is famous for its white tigers (see p239). The zoo surrounded by a thick forest, enables the animals to live in natural surroundings. Panthers and ghariaas (*Gavialis gangeticus*) have been successfully bred in captivity here.

Nandan Kanan Zoo

 Tue-Sun.  

0 metres 500
 0 yards 500



Guardian figures, Rajarani Temple



The beautifully sculpted torana of Mukteshwar Temple

Chausath Yogini Temple,
 Puri, Konarak,
 Dhauli & Pipili



Exploring Bhubaneswar's Surroundings



Terracotta
roof tile

Many sites of historical and architectural significance lie close to Bhubaneswar. They include Jain monastic caves, Hindu temples, Buddhist stupas and ancient rock inscriptions, dotting the lush green landscape around the city. Dating from the 3rd century BC (when the area was part of the great kingdom of Kalinga) to the 13th century AD, these sites

bear witness to the region's political and religious importance for a continuous period of over 1,000 years.



Bagh Gumph at Udaigiri, shaped like the open mouth of a tiger

Udaigiri and Khandagiri Caves

6 km (4 miles) NW of Bhubaneswar

☐ daily ☞ ☞ Sadhu Convention
Jan

The twin hills of Udaigiri ("Sunrise Hill") and Khandagiri ("Broken Hill") were honeycombed to make retreats for Jain monks in the 3rd century BC. Located just off the highway that runs from Bhubaneswar to Kolkata, the hills rise suddenly from the flat surrounding plains, and are separated from each other by the highway.

As one approaches from Bhubaneswar, Udaigiri is the hill on the right, and is best explored first as it has the more interesting caves. The most impressive of its 18 caves is the double-storeyed **Rani Gumph** or "Queen's Cave" (Cave 1), which has vividly sculpted friezes of women dancing and playing music, kings and queens in courtly splendour, elephants, monkeys and foliage. The sculpture is remarkable for its expressive animation, and has

been compared with the famous sculpted gateways at Sanchi (see pp244-5).

Other notable caves are **Chhota Hath Gumph** or

"Small Elephant Cave" (Cave 3), with six superb elephants flanking its entrance, **Ganesh Gumph** (Cave 10) whose sculptures include an intriguing battle scene with a woman riding an elephant while soldiers on kits chase her, and

Bagh Gumph or "Tiger Cave" (Cave 12), its front ingeniously shaped like a

tiger's head with the mouth open. The most significant cave historically is **Hath Gumph** or "Elephant Cave" (Cave 14). On the rock above its entrance is an inscription from the 1st century BC. It records that the caves were built by Kharavela, third king of the powerful Chedi dynasty, whose conquests included large parts of Bihar, the Deccan and South India. The inscription also states that King Kharavela rebuilt his capital, Kalinganagar, after it was destroyed by a cyclone. Even today, Orissa remains vulnerable to cyclones, the last one having devastated the state in October 1999. On the summit of Udaigiri stands a ruined apsidal structure, probably used as a place of worship by the monks.

Across the highway, on **Khandagiri**, are 15 caves with carvings of sacred Jain symbols. The **Ananta Cave** (Cave 3), with its figures of twin serpents on the arches above the doorways, is the most important and has superb ornamentation and lively friezes, including one of boys chasing lions, bulls and other animals. Another enchanting carving in this cave shows the goddess Lakshmi in a lotus pool, being bathed with water from pitchers held by two elephants (see p24). Three of the caves – numbers 5, 8 and 9 – have impressive carved figures of the Jain *tirthankaras* in high relief.

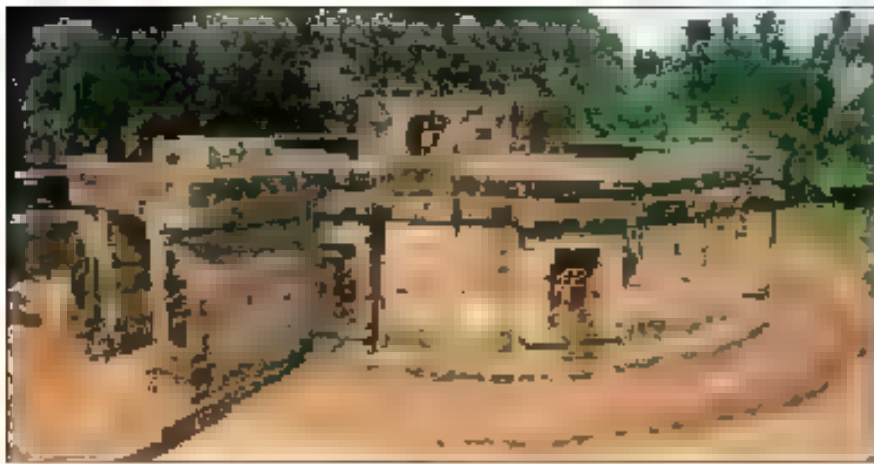
Unlike Buddhist caves such as those at Ajanta (see p479) and Ellora (see p478), most of the Udaigiri and Khandagiri caves are so low that it is impossible to stand upright in



Carvings at Udaigiri
Caves



Khandagiri, the site of a Jain monastery with rock-cut chambers



Hirapur's Chausath Yogini Temple, open to the sky

them. This was in keeping with the self-mortification and asceticism that Jain monks were expected to practise. The site still attracts sadhus who gather here every year in January to meditate in the caves. A lively fair springs up below the hills to entertain the crowds that gather to seek the sadhus' blessings.

Dhauli

8 km (5 miles) S of Bhubaneswar
A stark white Buddhist stupa in the middle of serene green paddy fields on the banks of the Daya river marks the site of the bloody battle of Kalinga, fought by one of India's greatest rulers: the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (see p42) in 260 BC. He won the war but the carnage and misery it inflicted on the people filled the emperor with remorse and brought about a dramatic change of heart. After this battle, he gave up *digvijaya* (military conquest) for *dharma-vijaya* (spiritual conquest), embraced Buddhism, and publicized his new maxims in rock edicts, inscribed in different parts of his empire. One of these is here: at the base of Dhauli Hill, in which the emperor declares, "All men are my children", and enjoins his officials to ensure impartiality, non-violence, justice and compassion in administration. The top of the rock is sculpted into an imposing elephant's head, symbolizing the Buddhist dharma. This is one of the earliest sculptures found in the subcontinent. The huge white **Shanti Stupa** ("Peace Pagoda") at the top of the hill was built by Japanese Buddhists in the early 1970s.

Chausath Yogini Temple

15 km (9 miles) SE of Bhubaneswar
This 9th-century, circular temple is dedicated to the *chausath yoginis* or 64 manifestations of the goddess Shakti, who symbolizes female creative energy. The images, each about 0.6 m (2 ft) tall and carved out of black chlorite stone, are placed in niches in the inner enclosure. The presiding deity, a graceful 10-armed *yogini*, is in the 31st niche. The temple is located in the pretty village of Hirapur.



Garden umbrella from Pipili, with appliqué-work

Environs

Pipili, 15 km (9 miles) south of Bhubaneswar, on the highway to Puri, is a village of artisans famous for their colourful appliqué-work fabrics. The craft originated to serve temples, providing intricately stitched awnings and covers for deities, and hangings in vivid hues for festival days. Today, garden umbrellas, cushion covers, wall hangings and bags are made in Pipili, using the same techniques, in which cloth is cut into stars, flower, animal and other decorative shapes, and stitched on to fabric of a contrasting colour. Shops selling these line both sides of the highway as it passes through Pipili, enveloping it in a blaze of colour.

FESTIVALS OF ORISSA

Tribal Mela (Jan)

Bhubaneswar. Orissa's large and varied tribal population exhibit their dances, music, arts and crafts at this colourful week-long festival.

Makar Mela (14 Jan)

Chilika Lake. Pilgrims bring offerings to a cave and temple devoted to the goddess Kali on a rocky is and called Kalnai in Chilika Lake.

Magha Saptami

(Jan/Feb), Konark. To honour Surya, the Sun God, pilgrims come for a purifying dip in the sea before they worship at the temple. A colourful fair is held, with stalls selling food and gifts.

Ashokashtami

(Mar/Apr), Bhubaneswar. The image of Shiva, the main deity of the Lingaraj Temple, is taken in procession in a chariot for a ritual bath in the sacred Bindusagar Tank.

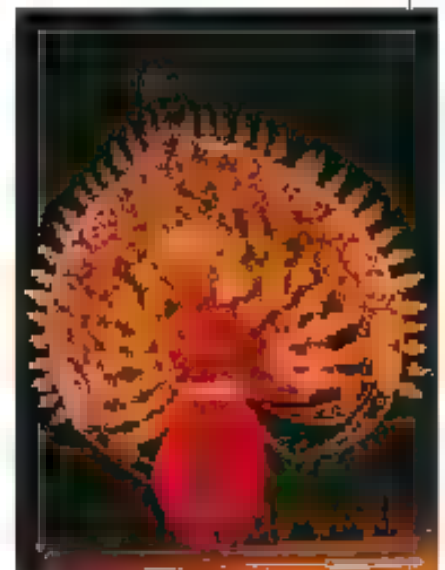
Chaitra Parba (Apr)

Baripada. This spring festival is marked by displays of the spectacular martial dance known as Mayurbhanj Chhau.

Rath Yatra (Jun/Jul), Puri (see p313)

Konark Dance Festival

(1-5 Dec), Konark. Classical dancers perform on an open air stage near the Sun Temple during this five-day festival.



A dancer performing during Rath Yatra celebrations

Konark: The Sun Temple



Colossal elephants in the temple complex

One of India's great architectural marvels, this temple to the Sun God, Surya, was conceived as a gigantic chariot with 12 pairs of wheels to carry the Sun God on his daily journey across the sky. Built in the 13th century by King Narasimhadeva of the

Eastern Ganga dynasty (see p44), the temple is also remarkable for its superb sculptures. Gods and demons, kings and peasants, elephants and horses jostle for space on its walls with dozens of erotic couples. Konark is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Maiden with Bird
Statues of graceful maidens in a variety of poses are carved on the temple's façades

Court Scene

This enchanting relief of the king being presented with a giraffe indicates the existence of maritime trade between Orissa's Eastern Ganga kings and Africa.



★ Surya

The majestic image of the Sun God stands on a chariot flanked by his wives and other deities.



★ Wheels of the Chariot

The 12 pairs of exquisitely carved wheels represent the months in a year, while the eight large spokes mark the division of the day into three-hour sections. The seven horses pulling the chariot represent the days of the week.



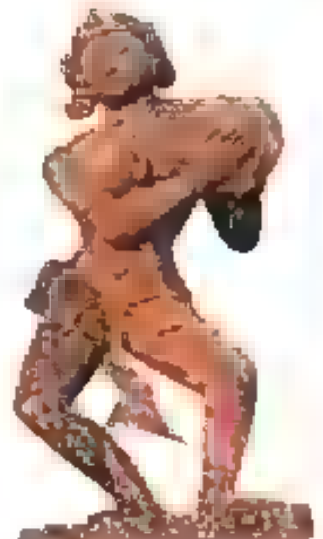
The Konark Sun Temple, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Pur district, 65 km (40 miles) SE of Bhubaneswar. Orissa Tourism, Sunvilla, (06758) 236 8202 daily
Magha Saptami (Jan/Feb), Konark Dance Festival (Dec). **Archaeological Museum** Fri-Wed.

The three-tiered roof is shaped like a stepped pyramid and crowned with a round flat stone called an *amalaka*. The terraces between each tier are covered with sculptures.

The Cymbal Player
This sculpture is in a row of wonderfully animated dancers, musicians and drummers on the terrace of the pyramidal roof



Medallion
Deities and dancers decorate the medallions on the hub and the spokes of the wheels



Erotic Sculpture
A demure snake goddess provides a contrast to the amorous couple beside her. The erotic sculptures at Konark are a celebration of the joys of life



Bhogmandir

Main entrance

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Surya
- ★ Wheels of the Chariot

Bhogmandir
The ruined "Hall of Offerings" has gigantic rampant lions on cowering elephants



Exploring Konark

The Sun Temple at Konark originally had a towering *deul* (spire), 70 m (230 ft) high, over its main sanctuary. Visible far out at sea, the temple was an important navigational aid for European sailors headed for Calcutta (Kolkata), who called it the Black Pagoda. Over time, the temple's easily weathered khondalite stone was progressively corroded by seawinds and sand, and by the 19th century the great tower had completely collapsed. Only its base still remains. The temple's Bhogmandir or "Hall of Offerings" is now roofless, but its plinth and pillars remain, carved with figures of dancers, depicting the poses still used in classical Odissi dance (see p28).

The chariot-shaped *jagamohan* or assembly hall, was buried for nearly two centuries under drifting sand. It was only unearthed and restored by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in the early 20th century. Its many remarkable sculptures include no less than 1,700 elephants in animated motion, carved on the plinth; and several enchanting *alasa kanyas* (maidens at leisure), playing with a pet bird, holding a mirror, or leaning against a doorway.

Three life-size images of the Sun God, Surya, made of contrasting coloured chlorite stone, are positioned so that the sun's rays fall on their faces, turn by turn, at dawn, noon and sunset.

In the northeast corner of the compound is the **Shrine of the Nine Planets**, a large stone slab carved with the deities of the nine planets. Colossal sculptures of war horses and elephants stand at the north and south. Near the compound is the **Archaeological Museum** with fine sculptures recovered from the site. The beach is 3 km (2 miles) from the temple, but is unsafe for swimming because of treacherous undercurrents.



Puri's Jagannath Temple, topped with Vishnu's wheel and flag

Puri ③

Puri district 60 km (37 miles) S of Bhubaneswar. ☎ 157,650 🚗 🚆

🏠 Orissa Tourism, Station Rd, (06752) 222 664 🕒 daily 🚶 Rath Yatra (Jun/Jul). **Jagannath**

Temple ☐ daily 🕒 to non-Hindus



Hand-painted *ganjifa* playing card from Puri

One of India's most important pilgrimage centres, this seaside town is dominated by the towering Jagannath Temple. Early European sailors

for whom its 65-m (213-ft) high spire was an important landmark, called it the White Pagoda, to differentiate it from Konark's Sun Temple which they named Black Pagoda.

The **Jagannath Temple** was built in the 12th century by King Anantavarman of the Eastern Ganga dynasty (see p44). Surrounded by a 6-m

(20-ft) high wall, its main gate is guarded by a pair of brightly painted stone lions. Non-Hindus are not allowed in, but can get a good view of the complex, with its multitude of small shrines and its courtyard thronged with pilgrims, from the roof of the Raghunandan Library across the street from the main gate.

The temple is similar in design to the Lingara Temple in Bhubaneswar (see p306), with three smaller shrines adjoining its tall sanctuary tower. The elegant stone column near the entrance, topped with the figure of Arun, charioteer of the Sun God, was brought here from the Sun Temple at Konark in the 18th century.

From the temple, Puri's main street **Bada Danda** runs through the town, crammed with pilgrims, rest houses and shops selling food, religious souvenirs and handicrafts. Local specialties are the colourful *pattachitra* paintings and round *ganjifa* playing cards painted with religious themes.

Puri's beach is its other attraction, though not always safe for swimming because of dangerous undercurrents. The long beach front is crowded with stalls and groups of pilgrims along Marine Parade. Sunbathers and swimmers should therefore head to the eastern end, which is cleaner and more secluded, or to the beaches attached to the better hotels. Local fishermen wearing conical hats serve as lifeguards on the beach, and take visitors out to sea in their boats to watch the sunsets.



A family picnic on Puri Beach

The Jagannath Cult

A unique cult has grown around Jagannath (Lord of the Universe), an incarnation of Vishnu. At Puri's Jagannath Temple, 6,000 resident priests perform the elaborate daily rituals of bathing, dressing and worshipping the image of Jagannath, together with those of his brother Balbhadr and sister Subhadra. Sumptuous meals are offered to the three



Lord Jagannath

deities five times a day, prepared daily by 400 temple cooks. During the spectacular Rath Yatra (chariot festival) in June/July the deities are taken out in a procession in mammoth wooden chariots, pulled by thousands of devotees. The word juggernaut (large truck) is derived from the size and unstoppable force of Lord Jagannath's chariot.



Temple offerings are sold at numerous stalls at the gates of the temple.



Devotees try to spend at least three days paying obeisance to Jagannath.

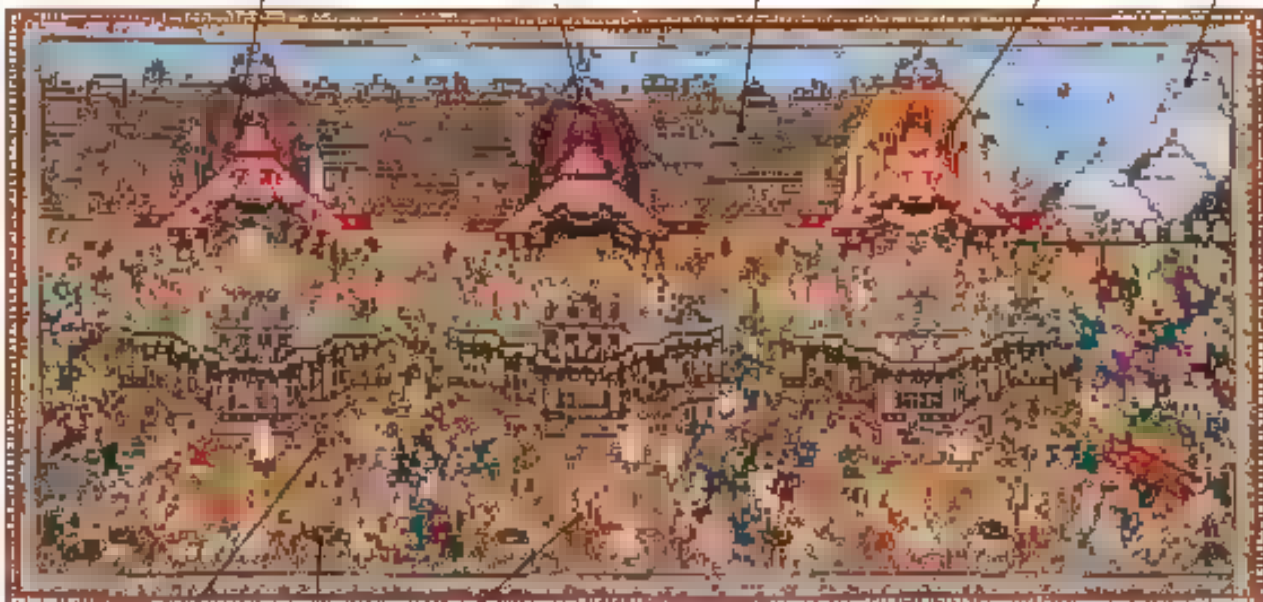
Balbhadr has a white face and rides in a chariot with 14 wheels and four horses.

Subhadra has a yellow face and rides in a red chariot.

Puri cityscape

Jagannath's chariot is 1,370 m (4,495 ft) tall and has 16 wheels.

Jagannath Temple



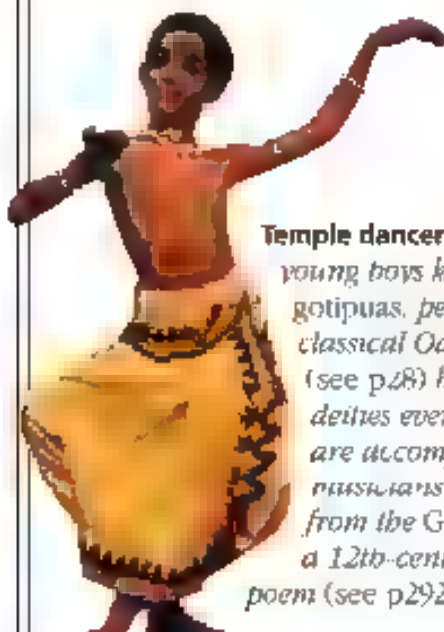
Policeman

Musicians and drummers

Temple priests

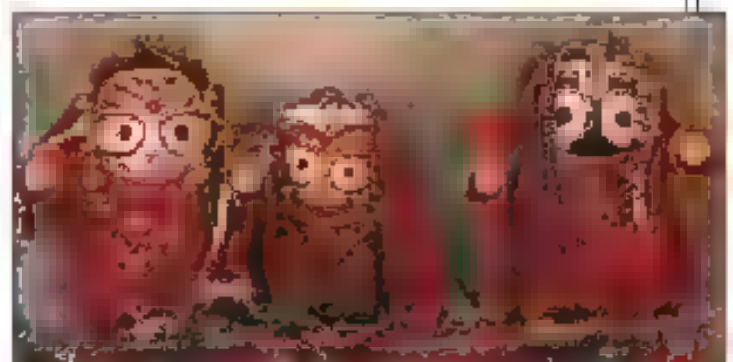
PATTACHITRA PAINTING OF THE RATH YATRA

The Rath Yatra marks Lord Jagannath's annual journey to his birthplace, the Gundicha Temple, just over 2 km (1.3 miles) away. Over 200,000 people, including priests, pilgrims, musicians and drummers, join the procession.



Temple dancers.

Young boys known as gotipuas perform the classical Odissi dance (see p28) before the deities every night. They are accompanied by musicians singing verses from the Gita Govinda, a 12th-century epic poem (see p292).



Balbhadr, Subhadra and Jagannath, the three deities, are believed to be of tribal origin, but have been absorbed into the Hindu pantheon. They have huge, all-seeing eyes, and outstretched arms to protect and bless all mankind.







A view of Chilika Lake, a haven for water birds and dolphins

Chilika Lake 4

Puri, Ganjam & Khordha districts. 50 km (31 miles) SW of Puri. Balugaon, then taxi or bus. Balugaon & Satpada. Orissa Tourism, Birkul, (06758) 220 488. Makar Mela (Jan). **Satpada and Nalabana Islands** hired from Birkul, Balugaon, Satpada & Rambha.

A great, shallow lagoon covering 1,100 sq km (425 sq miles), Chilika is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a sandy ridge with just a narrow channel connecting it to the sea. Believed to be the largest brackish water lake in Asia, Chilika is recognized as one of the most important wetlands in the world because of the phenomenal variety of aquatic and birdlife it supports. From November to February, the lake and its reed islands teem with nesting birds, including several winter migrants, such as the golden plover, the flamingo, the purple moorhen and the osprey. A major attraction at Chilika are dolphins, which are often spotted off **Satpada Island** located at the confluence of the lake and the sea. **Nalabana Island** at the core of the lake, is the best place for birdwatching. Orissa Tourism arranges boat trips to both the islands. **Kalijai Temple**, built on a small rocky island, is a pilgrimage spot which attracts festive crowds during the Makar Mela in January. The lake also supports the local people who earn their living from Chilika's prawns, crabs and fish.

Gopalpur-on-Sea 5

Ganjam district. 172 km (107 miles) SW of Bhubaneswar. Berhampur 18 km (11 miles) E of town centre, then taxi or bus. Orissa Tourism, Berhampur Railway Station, (0680) 228 0226.

This quiet seaside town was in ancient times, a great seaport for Orissa's maritime trade with Indonesia (see p318). The British later developed it as a beach resort and it now has a sleepy charm, except during the Durga Puja holidays (see p281) in October, when it swarms with tourists from Bengal. Swimming in the sea is not safe because of treacherous undercurrents. But the beach, lined with bungalows and dotted with casuarina groves, is a good place to spend the day, watching the fishing boats and the sunset.

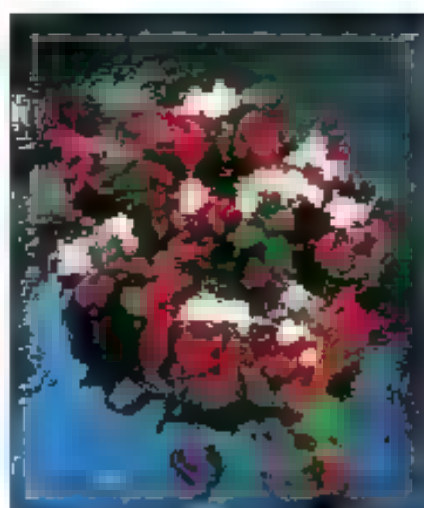
Berhampur 6

Ganjam district. 170 km (106 miles) SW of Bhubaneswar. Orissa Tourism, Railway Station, (0680) 228 0226.

The main commercial centre in southern Orissa, Berhampur is famous for its beautiful handwoven ikat silk, available in its bustling bazaar where weavers sit at their looms. The railhead for the seaside town of Gopalpur-on-Sea, Berhampur is also a convenient base for visiting **Jaugarh**, 35 km (22 miles) north of the city. Jaugarh has a 3rd-century BC rock edict erected by the Emperor Ashoka following the Battle of Kalinga, after which he had a change of heart. The edict is similar to the one at Dauli.



Painted panel from the 17th-century temple at Buguda



Floral offering to a goddess of fertility at Taptapani's hot springs

(see p309), in which Ashoka declares "All men are my children" and spells out his ethical code. A short distance away, at **Buguda**, is the Bramachinarayan Temple, built in the 17th century, with beautiful murals depicting scenes from the *Ramayana*.

Taptapani 7

Ganjam district. 51 km (32 miles) W of Berhampur. Orissa Tourism, (06816) 255 031.

Picturesquely located on a forested hill in the Eastern Ghats, this spa is renowned for its hot springs. The boiling, sulphurous water bubbles out of a crevice in the hillside and is piped to a pool in a clearing. Near the pool is a small shrine to a tribal goddess of fertility as, apart from being beneficial for various chronic ailments, the hot springs are also believed to cure infertility. A tree with seed pods overhangs the pool, and women seeking the infertility cure are supposed to pick up seeds from the tree that have fallen to the muddy bottom of the pool – a difficult feat, especially since the water is too hot for more than a quick dip. The Saora tribal women (see p321), whose villages are nearby, can often be seen taking the cure. The most comfortable way to enjoy the hot springs is by renting a room in the Orissa Tourism rest house just below the pool, which has hot water from the springs piped directly into its bathtubs.

The Orissa Weaver's Art

Orissa has a long and rich tradition of handwoven textiles. Over 300,000 people work in the state's textile industry producing a range of materials, from the simple cotton weaves of tribal areas, to the elaborate painted textiles for use in temples. Orissa's forests yield a wealth of wild silk cocoons which, in recent



Eagle motif in ikat fabric

years, have been supplemented by mulberry plantations. The state is famous for its silk ikat weaves, an intricate technique in which warp and weft threads are tie-dyed in such a way as to produce patterns when woven. Typical motifs include birds, animals, fish, seashells, holy *natraksh* beads and temple spires.



The **bomkai cotton sari** from Ganjam district was traditionally woven for the local aristocracy. Its distinguishing features are the temple spire pattern on the border and the rich end piece with its elaborate ikat motifs.



Vriksha Pattachitra shows a contemporary minimalist version of the traditional painted textile, used as a temple hanging. The tree is painted on natural-colored wild silk (tussar).



The **kotpad sari** from the Koraput tribal region has a simple elegance with unbleached cotton offset by a rich red madder-dyed border.



The **ekphulia (one flower) sari** achieves a striking effect by repeating the one-flower and fish motifs.



The **conch-shell motif** in this silk ikat panel with its delicate, curvilinear pattern, is an example of the fine sense of design and colour that Orissa's weavers have.



The **fish motif** in this tussar silk textile symbolizes prosperity and luck. Below the fish are a row of damroos (hand-beat drums).

The **jota ikat sari** is inspired by the finger-painted patterns, called jota, that adorn the walls of many village homes in Orissa. The rich red colour of the sari and the rows of stylized trees and temple spires on the borders, add to the sumptuous effect.

Cuttack ③

Cuttack district 35 km (22 miles) N of Bhubaneswar 535, 150. ③ Orissa Tourism, Arunodaya Market Building, Link Rd. (0671) 231 2225. ③ Bali Yatra (Oct/Nov).

Situated on the Mahanadi Delta, Cuttack is Orissa's most populous city and was its capital from the 13th century onwards until 1956, when the capital was moved to Bhubaneswar (see p306). There is little evidence today of the city's historic past. The gateway and moat of the 13th-century **Sarabati Fort**, in northwest Cuttack, are all that

remain of this great citadel which once had a nine-storeyed palace. The eastern part of town is more interesting, with silversmiths' shops in **Balu Bazaar** and **Nayasarak** where Cuttack's famous silver filigree jewellery is made. Nearby, in the shops on **Jail Road** the full range of Orissa's beautiful handicrafts are available including ikat silk, carved homeware and paintings.

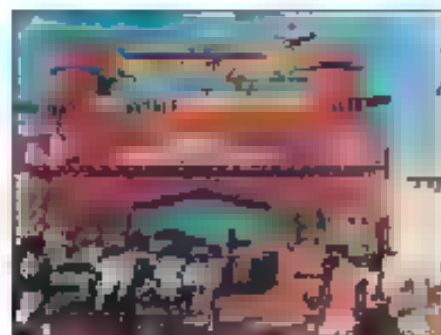
In this area, a cluster of green domes marks the 18th-century **Kadam Rasul Mosque** where the Prophet Mohammed's footprints are carved on a round stone



The 18th-century Kadam Rasul Mosque in Cuttack

THE INDONESIAN CONNECTION

From the 4th century BC to the 14th century AD, the power and wealth of successive kingdoms in Orissa derived from their rich maritime trade, especially with Bali, Java and Sumatra. Indeed, ever since the 10th century, the word *klung*, derived from Kaung which was the ancient name of Orissa, has been used in Indonesia to refer to India and Indians. With the trading links came cultural influences, which are still visible in Orissa's crafts. The state's weavers originally learned the intricate art of ikat weaving (see p317) from Indonesia, and later were especially commissioned to weave all the silks for ceremonial use in the royal courts and temples of Indonesia. Another Orissa craft that originally came from Indonesia was the silver filigree work that is still being done in Cuttack. Today, Orissa's old maritime links with Bali, Java and



The colourful entrance gate to the Bali Yatra fair at Cuttack

Sumatra are commemorated in a festival called Bali Yatra (Bali Journey) held in Cuttack during the full moon of Kartik (October–November). A colourful fair is held on the banks of the Mahanadi river and tiny boats made of banana bark are lit with clay lamps and floated in the river.

Ratnagiri ③

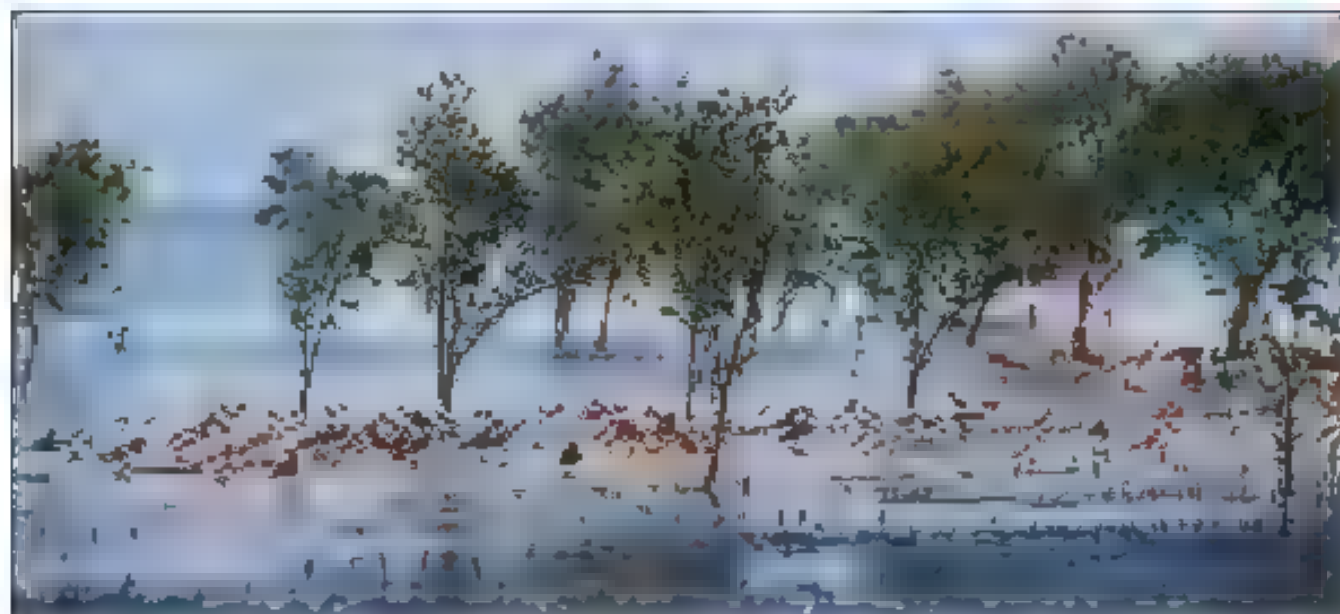
Cuttack district 70 kms (44 miles) NE of Cuttack ③ Orissa Tourism, Link Rd. Cuttack. (0671) 231 2225

The three Buddhist sites of Ratnagiri, Udaigiri and Lalitgiri, situated close to each other, are most conveniently visited on a day trip from Cuttack or Bhubaneswar driving through a beautiful landscape of low hills and lush paddy fields. The most impressive of the three sites is Ratnagiri ("Hill of Jewels") which, between the 7th and the 11th centuries, was a major Buddhist university and monastic establishment described by the 7th-century Chinese traveler Hsien Tsang (see p219). Located on top of a mound, crowned by a large stupa, the best-preserved structure here is a monastery with a central courtyard and an impressive colonnade around the monks' cells. A beautiful, 4-m (13-foot) high image of the seated Buddha can be seen inside, together with other Buddhist divinities and the entrance doorway is superbly carved. A small **Archaeological Museum** displays other sculptures found at the site.

Udaigiri ("Sunrise Hill"), 10 km (6 miles) south of Ratnagiri, is still being excavated and seems to have better preserved sculptures. The western spur of the hill has a row of rock-cut



The serene 7th-century meditating Buddha image at Ratnagiri





Flocks of waders amidst the mangroves at Bhitarkanika Sanctuary







sculptures while the northern spur is covered with the ruins of brick stupas. A colossal sculpture of the Buddha here has an inscription dating it to the 8th century.

Lalitgiri ("Hill of Grace") about 10 km (6 miles) south of Udaigiri (and directly connected by bus to Cuttack), is believed to be the oldest of the sites. The ruins, spread over two adjacent hills, include a terraced stone platform, a gallery of life-size Bodhisattva figures and an apsidal temple. Some of the better-preserved sculptures and a carved doorway have been incorporated into a modern Hindu temple. At the foot of a hill is a village of stone-carvers, who keep alive Orissa's fine tradition of stone sculpture.

Ratnagiri Archaeological Museum

 Sat-Thu 

Bhitarkanika Sanctuary

Kendrapara district, 106 km (66 miles) NE of Cuttack. **Entry points:** Chandbali, Rajnagar  Bhadrakh, 50 km (31 miles) NW of Chandbali, then bus  to Rajnagar  from Rajnagar or Chandbali to Dangmal, Ekakula & Habalikhati.  For permits and bookings contact Bhubaneswar, (06786, 220 397 or Rajnagar, (06729) 272 460  mid-Oct-mid-Apr. 

Famous as the nesting ground of the Olive Ridley turtle, this 170-sq km (66-sq mile) sanctuary is situated on

the delta of the Brahmani and Baitarani rivers on the Bay of Bengal. It also has the largest mangrove forests in the country after the Sunderbans in West Bengal (see pp288-9) with 63 of the 72 known mangrove species found here.

Encompassing 12 offshore islands, long sandy beaches and numerous rivulets and creeks, Bhitarkanika is home to an impressive range of fish more than 170 species of birds such as storks, egrets,

ibis and migratory ducks, and the largest number of estuarine crocodiles in the country.

Accommodation is available at a forest rest house at Chandbali, the entry point to the sanctuary as well as deep within the sanctuary at Dangmal, Habalikhati and Ekakula (all three are accessible by boat). Orissa Tourism in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack organize tours and the necessary Forest Department permits for Bhitarkanika.

THE OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLE

Every year in an awe-inspiring phenomenon, hundreds of thousands of Olive Ridley turtles arrive from as far away as South America, to nest at Gahirmatha, a 10-km (6-mile) stretch of beach near the mouth of the Brahmani river in Bhitarkanika Sanctuary.

The world's largest *arribada* (Spanish for "the great arrival") occurs in February and March

when some 200,000 nesting females congregate here, each laying between 50 and 200 eggs in deep hollows they excavate in the sand. After a two-month incubation with the sun's heat, the hatchlings emerge in millions and scamper out to the sea at night. Sadly, less than 0.1 per cent



An Olive Ridley turtle nesting at Gahirmatha Beach



Olive Ridley hatchlings heading for the sea

survive to adulthood as dogs, seagulls, sharks as well as human poachers take an enormous toll on their numbers. The absence of *arribadas* in 1997 and 1998 caused much alarm among conservationists until in March 2000 a record 700,000 Olive Riddies arrived at Gahirmatha. Since the turtles return each year to nest at the spot where they were born, the cycle continues.

Baleshwar 11

Baleshwar district 214 km (133 miles) NE of Bhubaneswar
 Orissa Tourism, SPA Complex, Station Square, (06782) 262 048.

Once a bustling seaport, Baleshwar was established by the British in 1642. It was later in the possession of the French and the Dutch, but had lost its importance by the 18th century, with the siltin'g up of the port. Its colonial past is visible in the ruins of some Dutch tombs, and what are said to be the remnants of old canals which led to the sea. Today Baleshwar is a sleepy town, surrounded by paddy fields and villages, and renowned for the pretty hand-crafted lacquer boxes and brass fish made locally.

Environs

The tranquil seaside village of **Chandipur**, 16 km (10 miles) east of Baleshwar, is easily reached by a short taxi or scooter ride from the town. Here the sea recedes up to 5 km (3 miles) at low tide, leaving an expanse of clean white sand. Orissa Tourism

offers accommodation in a picturesque old bungalow a short distance from the beach, with the day's fresh catch served at dinner. The only blot on this peaceful landscape is the Indian Army's test firing range for rockets, just outside Chandipur village, against which environmentalists and villagers have been campaigning for many years.



Brass fish, Baleshwar

This festival is a small-scale version of the one that is held in Puri (see p312) but is equally lively and vibrant, as the

entire town joins in the procession. A unique feature in Baripada is that the chariot of the female deity Subhadra, is pulled only by women.

Another colourful festival held here is **Chaitra Parba** (in April), when tribal groups perform the vigorous Chhau dance wearing fabulous costumes. It was originally performed by warriors just before they went on to the battlefield. In the eastern part of town **Baripada Museum** has fine sculptures, pottery, and coins found in the area.

Baripada Museum

Tue–Sun

Environs

Haripur, 16 km (10 miles) southeast of Baripada, has the evocative ruins of palaces and temples built by the rulers of the Bhanja dynasty who made this their capital in the 15th century. The most impressive ruins are of the brick-built Rasikaraya Temple, and the Durbar Hall of the Bhanja kings.

Simlipal National Park 13

Mayurbhanj district 320 km (199 miles) N of Bhubaneswar. **Entry points:** Lulung & Jashipur Baripada, 50 km (30 miles) E of the park, then bus or taxi. to Lulung (via Baripada) & Jashipur For bookings and permits contact Field Director, Simlipal Tiger Reserve, Baripada, (06792) 52 553. Nov–mid-June. extra charges jeeps available in the park.

This extraordinarily beautiful park is located amidst the pristine forests and hills of northeast Orissa. Stretching over an area of 2,750 sq km (1,062 sq miles), Simlipal comprises dense sal (*Shorea robusta*) and rosewood forests, broken by lush grasslands. Numerous rivers and cascading rapids traverse the forest, creating spectacular



Women tending their paddy fields near Baleshwar

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p701 and pp729–30



A waterfall cascading down the hills at Barehipani, Simlipal National Park

waterfalls, such as those at Joranda (150 m/492 ft) and Barehipani (400 m/1,312 ft).

Originally the maharaja of Mayurbhanj's private hunting ground, Simlipal was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1957. One of the earliest tiger reserves in India, it is home to about 100 tigers, as well as an impressive range of other fauna, including elephants, leopards, deer, gaur (Indian bison) and pangolins (or scaly anteaters). These curious-looking animals, covered with large overlapping scales, feed exclusively on termites and ants, tearing open ant hills with their powerful claws and scooping up the insects with their long tongues. When threatened, the pangolin rolls up into an impenetrable armoured ball. Over 230

species of birds can also be seen at Simlipal.

The rare *muggers* (marsh crocodiles) can be spotted in rivers or basking on the banks where they dig tunnels to keep cool.



Pangolin at Simlipal

At Jashipur, the western entry point to the park, there's a

Crocodile Sanctuary where the reptiles can be observed at close quarters. One of the park's best spots for viewing wildlife is located in the grasslands at **Bacchuri Chara**, which are a favourite haunt of elephant herds. Another good area for sightings is at **Manghasani Peak**

(1,158 m/3,799 ft), one of the highest in the park. Basic food and accommodation are available in forest rest houses at Laung, Barehipani, Ghaha, Joranda and Nawana.

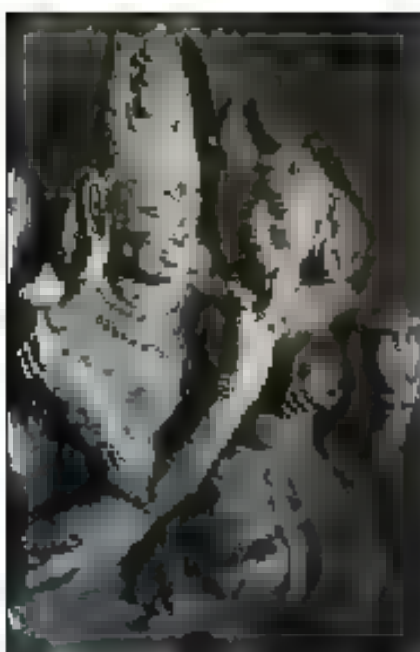
Environs

The capital of the Bhanja kings in the 10th and 11th centuries, **Khiching** has some of the finest examples of temple sculpture to be seen in Orissa. It is 20 km (12 miles) west of Jashipur, the western entry point to Simlipal National Park, and 114 km (71 miles) west of Bapatana. The main sight here is the towering Khichakeshwan temple, reconstructed in the early 20th century entirely from the ruins of the original temple that stood here. The temple is adorned with superb images of several deities, including a vibrant dancing Ganesha. A number of other temples, together with the ruins of two forts built by the Bhanja kings, dot the hamlet.

The small **Archaeological Museum** is well worth visiting. Among its highlights are outstanding life-size statues of Shiva and his consort Parvati, and exquisite sculptural panels from now-fallen temples.

Archaeological Museum

☐ Tue–Sun ☑ public hrs. ☑



An 11th-century sculpture of Shiva and Parvati, Khiching

TRIBES OF ORISSA

More than 60 different tribes, descended from the original, pre-Aryan inhabitants of the land, live in Orissa. Many still inhabit hills and forests in the remote interior of the state, relatively untouched by outside influences. The Saoras, who live in the vicinity of Taptapani (see p316), are agriculturists whose mud houses are beautifully painted and decorated with carved doors and lintels. Further west live the Koyas, whose customs decree that their women must only marry considerably younger men. The dominant tribe in Orissa are the Kondhs, who used to perform human sacrifice to ensure the fertility of their land, until the British stamped out this practice in the mid-19th century. Today the Kondhs are renowned for their knowledge of medicine, herbs and their beautiful metal jewellery. The Orissa government is now promoting tours of some tribal areas. Interested visitors should contact Orissa Tourism in Bhubaneswar (0674) 43 2203, for information about the necessary permits as well as accommodation in areas that have few facilities for travellers. For more details see pp754–55.



Kondh girl in her tribal jewellery



ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST

Assam and the six northeastern states—often called the Seven Sisters—make up the most geographically isolated and least visited part of India. This region, which has international borders with China, Myanmar (Burma), Bhutan, and Bangladesh, has an unusually rich diversity of ethnic groups, languages, religions, climates, and landscapes. The largest of the Seven Sisters is Assam, spread along the valley of the Brahmaputra river,

and famous for its tea gardens and for the rare one-horned rhinoceros. The rolling green hills of Meghalaya boast the delightful hill station of Shillong, as well as one of the wettest places on earth, Cherrapunji. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura are home to more than 100 different tribes with distinct and fascinating cultures. The Northeast is also a naturalist's paradise, with a wealth of rare flora and fauna.

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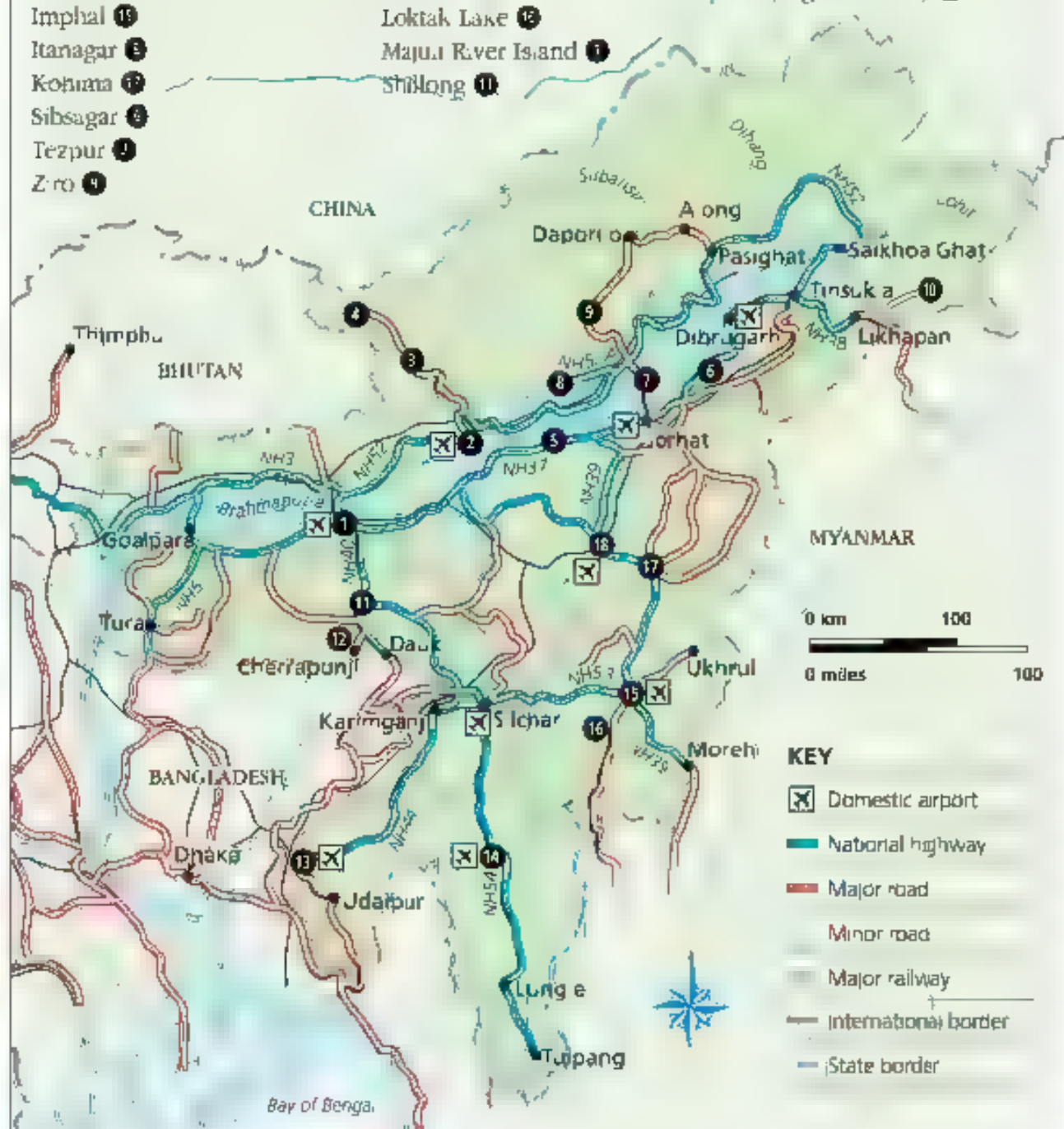
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Devotees at Guwahati's Kamakhya Temple, a major centre of pilgrimage for Hindus

Guwahati ①

Kamrup district. 1,081 km (672 miles) NE of Kolkata. 808,000. Borjhar, 25 km (16 miles) W of city centre, then bus or taxi. Assam Tourism, Station Rd, (0361) 254 4475. Rongali Bihu (Apr), Ambubachi (Jun), Assam Tea Festival (Jan).

The capital of Assam, Guwahati is also the gateway to Northeast India. Ringed by the Neelachal Hills, the city stretches along both banks of the broad Brahmaputra river. An ancient seat of tantric Hinduism, with a number of interesting temples in its environs, Guwahati is now a busy commercial centre for Assam's tea and oil industries. Its outer fringes are dotted with the slender, graceful, betelnut palm trees from which Guwahati (literally "Betel Nut Market") derives its name.

Kamakhya Temple

Perched on Nilachal hill, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of the city, this temple is one of India's most important pilgrimage destinations. The present structure with its typically Assamese beehive-shaped *shikhara* dates to the 17th century, after the original temple was destroyed by

Muslim invaders. According to legend, as a furious and grieving Shiva carried the corpse of his wife, Sati (also known as Parvati) around the skies, parts of her dismembered body fell to the earth (see p279). All these sites have been sanctified by major temples. Kamakhya is believed to mark the place where her vagina fell, and is therefore said to have special powers associated with energy and creation.



Brass utensil for serving betel leaf

In accordance with tantric rituals, a goat is sacrificed here every day, and offered to the goddess. The giant turtles in the temple ponds look forward to being fed by visitors. The colourful, annual Ambubachi festival, which marks the end of the earth's menstrual cycle, attracts pilgrims here from all over India, to be blessed by the goddess.

Navagraha Temple

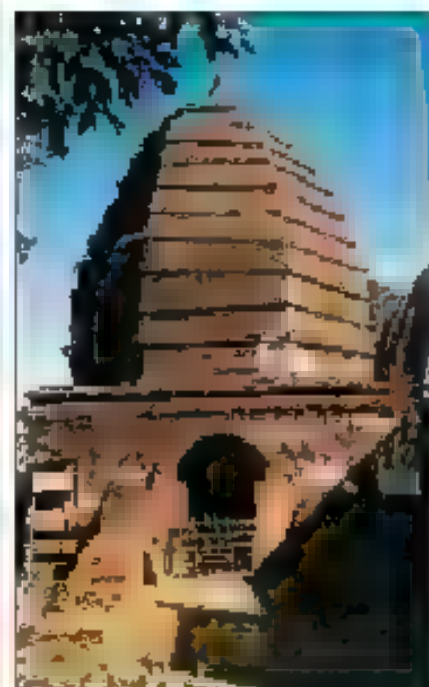
On Chitranchal hill in northeast Guwahati, is the Navagraha ("Nine Planets") Temple, believed to mark the site of the ancient city of Pragjyotishpur, Guwahati's old name, which was famous as a centre of astronomy. Beneath its red beehive-shaped dome is a dark chamber with nine *angas* representing the nine planets

Umananda Temple

Peacock Island. Umananda Ghat, 1 km (0.6 miles) N of railway station. Enchantingly located on the lush green Peacock Island in the middle of the Brahmaputra, this 16th-century temple is also dedicated to Shiva's wife. The island, swarming with friendly langur monkeys, is an excellent place to stand and watch the river, deceptively slow on the surface but with swift undercurrents.

State Museum

GN Bordoioi Rd. Tel (0361) 254 0651. Tue-Sun. This interesting museum, just east of the railway station, has fine reconstructions of tribal villages, a comprehensive



Umananda Temple, on a pretty island in the Brahmaputra

collection of local handicrafts and a gallery of medieval stone and bronze sculptures, which were excavated from Amban, an archaeological site in the heart of the city.

✱ Zoo & Botanical Gardens

RG Baruah Rd. ☐ Sat–Thu 📞 📺
extra charges

The well-maintained zoo is in the eastern part of the city. Clouded leopards, hornbills and, of course, the native one-horned rhinos, can be seen in spacious, moated enclosures. The Botanical Gardens adjoin the zoo.

Environ

The Vashishtha Temple,

1.2 km (7 miles) southeast of Guwahati, stands in a pretty spot that marks the confluence of three streams, with a waterfall and groves of trees around it. This is said to be the site of the ashram of the sage Vashishtha – a character in the *Ramayana* (see p27).

Sualkuchi, 32 km (20 miles) west of Guwahati, is a major weaving centre for Assam's famous golden-hued *muga*



Vashishtha Temple, on a wooded hill surrounded by streams

and *paat* silk. Several houses here have women working at their looms, and they are happy to welcome visitors.

Hajo, 32 km (20 miles) northwest of Guwahati, is a pilgrimage site for Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. The 16th-century Hayagriva Mahadeva Temple, on Manikuta Hill, is sacred to Hindus and Buddhists, who believe that the Buddha died here. Fine

bas-reliefs of scenes from the *Ramayana* decorate its walls. Below the temple is a pond, home to Hajo's most famous resident – a giant turtle. On another hill is the Poa Mecca ("Quarter of Mecca") Mosque, established by an Iraqi prince who visited Assam in the 12th century. A pilgrimage here is believed to be equivalent to a quarter of the piety attained by a Haj pilgrimage to Mecca.

The spectacular temple ruins at **Madan Kamdev** are 50 km (31 miles) northwest of Guwahati. Exuberantly erotic carvings of deities and celestial nymphs lie strewn on a small block here. They date from the 10th to 12th centuries, when the area was ruled by the Pala dynasty (see p41).

THE MIGHTY BRAHMAPUTRA

The Son of Brahma, Creator of the Universe – is the name of this majestic river which dominates life in Assam and much of Arunachal Pradesh. Curiously, it is the only Indian river to have a male name. The Brahmaputra begins its 2,900-km (1,802-mile) course from near the holy mountain of Kailasa in Tibet, where it is known as the Tsang Po. Plunging down from a height of 5,200 m (17,060 ft), it then carves a straight, deep 1,100-km (684-mile) long furrow through the Tibetan Plateau. As it continues, the river makes a great sweeping turn around the eastern end of the Himalayas, before plummeting through the deep gorges of upper

Arunachal Pradesh where it is called the Siang. Here, the river is crossed by a group of frighteningly fragile-looking bridges made of rope, including the 367-m (1,204-ft) long suspension bridge at Kamsing, one of the longest in the world.

The Brahmaputra enters the plains near the Assam-Arunachal border, and then flows westward through Assam for 724 km (450 miles), broad and tranquil, except during the monsoon when it swells enormously, flooding flat land and forests, and sweeping away homes, crops and animals in an annual ritual of destruction. Just before the end of its course, the Brahmaputra merges with the Ganges to create the huge Bengal delta, before emptying into the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh.



The Brahmaputra river at dawn



Sculpture of a goddess from the temple ruins at Madan Kamdev



The ruins of Tezpur's Da Parbatia Temple, dating to the 5th–6th centuries AD

Tezpur ③

Somitpur district 180 km (112 miles) NE of Guwahati. 58,250 Saloni, 10 km (6 miles) N of town centre, then bus or taxi Tourist Office, Zenkins Rd, (03712, 221 016)

A picturesque town on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river, Tezpur is surrounded by undulating green valleys covered with tea gardens. The hills of northern Arunachal provide a scenic backdrop to the town and for visitors. Tezpur is a convenient stop and a take-off point for trips to parts of Arunachal Pradesh.

Tezpur means "City of Blood" and this gory name is derived from its legendary past as the capital of the Hindu demon kings, the Asuras, said to have been vanquished here by Lord Krishna in a bloody battle. More recently, in 1962 Tezpur was close to another bloodbath when the invading Chinese army reached its outskirts before suddenly declaring a ceasefire (see p57).

The ruins of the **Da Parbatia Temple**, 5 km (3 miles) west of the city, dating from the 5th to 6th centuries AD, bear testimony to Tezpur's ancient past, and represent the earliest example of sculptural art in Assam. All that is left of the temple are some sculptures and an exquisitely carved door

frame, with images of the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna on either side. **Cole Park**, close to the Tourist Lodge, is Tezpur's prettiest spot, with a beautifully landscaped garden near a lake. It is embellished with 9th- and 10th-century sculptures unearthed in the city. A charming 19th-century colonial church stands behind the Tourist Lodge.

Environs

Scenic **Bhalukpong** 58 km (36 miles) northwest of Tezpur is set in green foothills that mark the

border of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The Kameng river flows past it. Adrenal attractions are medicinal hot springs, and an Orchid Centre, located 7 km (4 miles) away at **Tipi**, with some 500 varieties of orchids native to Arunachal.

Nameri Sanctuary, 35 km (22 miles)

north of Tezpur covers 200 sq km (77 sq miles). The Jia Bhoreli river winds through its deciduous forests, which are home to clouded leopards, *mithuns* (Indian bison) and the rare white-

winged wood duck. Nameri can be explored on elephant back. The Potasali Eco-Camp on the river, run by the Forest Department, organizes white water rafting and *mahseer* fishing trips for visitors. **Orang Wildlife Sanctuary** 65 km (40 miles) northwest of Tezpur is often described as a mini-

Kaziranga (see pp330–31) since it has a similar landscape of marshes, streams and grassland, the favoured habitat of the one-horned rhinoceros. This little sanctuary is also home to the Asiatic wild buffalo and the Hoolock gibbon.

Nameri Sanctuary

Permits Divisional Forest Officer, Koloabhomora, (03712) 220 854 Sep–Apr extra charges. Potasali Eco-Camp 09854019932, 09435250025

Orang Wildlife Sanctuary

Permits Divisional Forest Officer, Mangaldai, (03712) 22 065 Oct–Apr

Bomdila ③

West Kameng district 140 km (87 miles) NW of Tezpur Lassar (Feb/Mar). **Travel permits** required (see p758)

The scenic road from Tezpur winds steeply up through thick forests to this pleasant town, at an altitude of 2,530 m (8,301 ft). The headquarters of Arunachal's West Kameng district, Bomdila has Buddhist monasteries surrounded by apple orchards, with views of snowcapped peaks, terraced paddy fields and waterfalls. The **Crafts Centre** is famous for its carpet weaving. The town's inhabitants belong largely to the Monpa and Sherdukpen tribes, who combine Tibetan Buddhism with some of their original animist rituals and beliefs. They wear a curious black cap with five "tails" projecting from its rim, that serve to drain rainwater away from the face.



Epiphytic orchid



Monpas celebrating their New Year with a Yak Dance near Bomdila



Rows of prayer wheels at the 17th-century Tawang Monastery

Tawang Monastery ❶

Tawang district 325 km/202 miles
NW of Tezpur Losar (Feb/Mar)
Travel permits required (see p758)

The largest Buddhist monastery in India, Tawang is situated in Arunachal Pradesh at an altitude of 3,050 m (10,007 ft). As the road ascends from Bomdila, the scenery becomes alpine, lush with pine, oak and rhododendron forests, and a short high-altitude bamboo which is the favourite food of the red panda (see p299). Past the Dirang Valley with its old *dzong* (fort), the road climbs sharply to the **Sela Pass**. At 4,249 m (13,940 ft), this is the second highest motorable pass in the world; the highest is in Ladakh (see p143). This barren, desolate landscape is softened by a serene lake that lies below the Sela Pass.

Beyond a memorial to a valiant Indian soldier who held up the advancing Chinese army during the India-China conflict of 1962, the road descends to a beautiful, wide valley. The monastery dramatically located on a spur surrounded by snowcapped peaks, dominates the valley. When the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959, his route into India was through Tawang and he still visits the area regularly to hold special prayers.

Founded in 1615 by a lama from Merak in neighbouring Bhutan, this Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) establishment (see p139)

has over 500 resident monks. It was also the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. The three-storeyed *dukhang* (assembly hall) has a magnificent 8-m (26-ft) high statue of the Buddha. The ancient library, leading onto the main courtyard, has an excellent collection of *thangkas* and valuable Buddhist manuscripts.

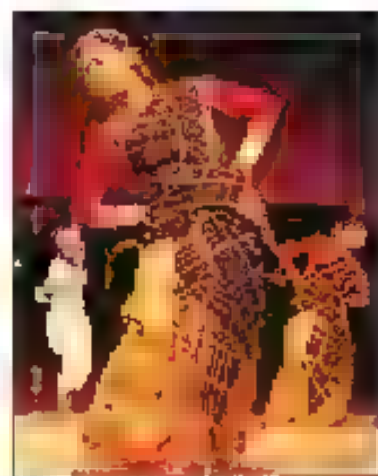
The **Bramdungchung Nunnery** associated with Tawang Monastery, is located 12 km (7 miles) northwest of Tawang. The road to the monastery, which can be reached by jeep, reveals a stunning alpine landscape of snowpeaks, Monpa hamlets with stone houses, and juniper and dwarf rhododendron bushes. Fluttering prayer flags and a long prayer wall mark the approach to the nunnery guarded, as are most of the monasteries in this region, by fierce Tibetan mastiffs.



An intricately painted Wheel of Life mural at Tawang Monastery

FESTIVALS OF ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST

Losar (Feb/Mar). Bomdila and Tawang. The Monpa and Sherdukpen tribes of Arunachal Pradesh celebrate their New Year with feasts, masked dances and special prayer sessions at monasteries.



Dancers at the Rongali Bihu Festival, Assam

Rongali Bihu (Apr). Guwahati. The Assamese New Year is celebrated across the state with exuberant singing, drumming and dancing. The women perform a gracefully sinuous dance while the men accompany them on horns and drums. The liveliest festivities are in Guwahati.

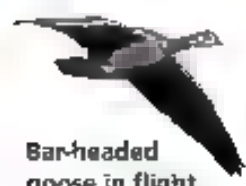
Weiking Dance (Apr/May), Shillong. This three-day festival to usher in the spring features processions, prayers and dances. Khasi virgins, wearing crowns and can jewelry, dance in a circle while young men dressed as warriors, with shields, bows and arrows form a ring around them.

Lai Haraoba (Apr/May). Imphal, and Morang. This Manipuri spring festival honours the many pre-Hindu nature deities revered in the region. Special prayer ceremonies, dazzling displays of Manipuri martial arts and graceful ritual dances are performed to appease the deities. The most beautiful celebrations take place at Morang.





Kaziranga National Park 5



Bar-headed
goose in flight

Assam's magnificent Kaziranga National Park, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, is the home of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros. Beautifully situated on the banks of the Brahmaputra, the 430-sq km (166-sq mile) park's landscape is characterized by vast grasslands and swamps, dotted with patches of semi-evergreen forest. The Mikir Hills, where several animals migrate during the monsoon, form its southern boundary. Kaziranga's rich variety of wildlife includes 80 tigers, large numbers of the Asiatic wild buffalo, herds of wild elephants, Hoolock gibbons, pythons and 300 species of birds, including the rare Bengal florican.



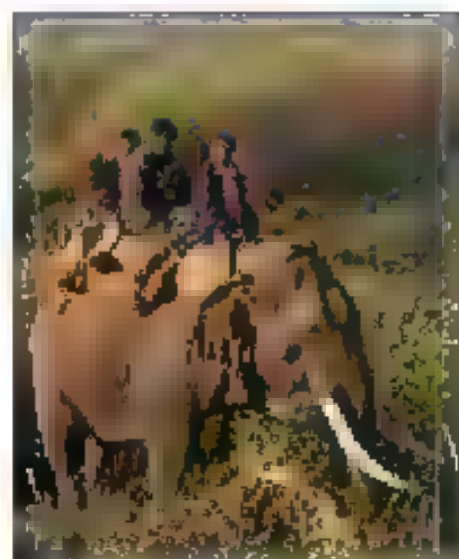
Asiatic Wild Buffalo

Kaziranga has India's largest population of this mammoth-horned buffalo which likes to wallow in the park's swamps.



Bengal Florican

This rare bird has beautifully streaked plumage.



Exploring Kaziranga

Visitors on elephant back are safe from charging rhinos and wild buffaloes.



THE INDIAN ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

Kaziranga is one of the last refuges of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), an endangered species that was close to extinction at the beginning of the 20th century. Successful conservation measures have seen their numbers rise to 2,500 (across Assam and the foothills of Nepal), of which 1,500 are in Kaziranga. Once found extensively across the subcontinent, the rhino population dwindled dramatically because of widespread poaching for its horn, a prized ingredient in Chinese medicine. Actually a mass of closely matted hair, each rhino horn fetches an exorbitant price in Southeast Asia where it is believed to have great medicinal and aphrodisiac properties.



A rhino mother and her baby in Kaziranga's vast grasslands



Beel (Shallow Lake)

Floods inundate the park every monsoon leaving behind beels and marshes as they recede. These attract herds of wild elephants, and many other animals and water birds.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Golaghat district 215 km (134 miles) NE of Guwahati. ✕ Jorhat, 96 km (60 miles) NE of Kohora, the entry point, then taxi. 🚗 Furkating, 75 km (47 miles) E of Kohora, then taxi. 🚗 🏠 Bonani Tourist Lodge, Kohora, (03776) 26 2423. ☑ Nov–Apr 📷 extra charges 🚗 Jeeps available 🏠



Hog Deer

These animals, closely related to the spotted deer (chital), are found in large numbers in the park's riverine grasslands.



Wildgrass Resort

Located 5 km (3 miles) east of Kohora, just outside the park, this eco-friendly resort (see p702) arranges elephant rides and trips to nearby tea plantations (see pp262–3).



Hoolock Gibbon

This 1 m (3.3 ft) ape can be recognized by the distinctive silvery band above its eyebrows and its loud u-hooping hoot which resounds through the forest.



KEY

- Park boundary
- National highway
- Minor road
- 📷 Tourist information
- 🌳 Viewpoint
- 🏠 Accommodation

Sibsagar ❸

Sibsagar district 570 km (230 miles) NE of Guwahati 54,500 Jorhat 60 km (37 miles) S of city centre, then taxi or bus. Assam Tourism, near Shivaloi Temple, (03772) 222 394 Shivratri (Feb/Mar)

At the heart of Assam's tea and oil-producing region, Sibsagar is also the state's most historic city, as the seat of the Ahom dynasty (see p49) which ruled Assam for 600 years. Originally from Myanmar (Burma) the Ahoms converted to Hinduism and gradually indigenized after conquering Assam in 1228. The Ahoms were defeated by the Burmese in 1817, and their kingdom became part of the British Indian Empire in 1826.

The Ahoms were great builders, as is evident from the ruins in and around Sibsagar. Dominating the town is the enormous 103-m (255-acre) man-made **Sibsagar Lake** with three temples on its banks. Especially impressive is the towering **Shivaloi Temple** with its 33-m (108-ft) high gilded spire, built by an Ahom queen in 1734. About 2 km (2 miles) south of the town are the ruins of two

18th-century brick palaces **Kareng Ghar** and **Talatal Ghar**. Both are seven storeys high, and the latter also has three underground floors and a warren of secret tunnels. To its northeast is the elegant **Rang Ghar** the oval, double-storeyed royal sports pavilion, constructed in 1746.

Majuli River Island ❹

Jorhat district 314 km (195 miles) NE of Guwahati Neamat Ghat, 13 km (8 miles) N of Jorhat from Neamat Ghat to Majuli, then bus to Garamur On arrival, foreigners must register with the Sub-Divisional Officer, Majuli, who also handles bookings.

Perhaps the largest inhabited river island in the world, Majuli covers an area of 929 sq km (359 sq miles).



Vaishnavite mask, Majuli

It is easy to forget that Majuli is an island, holding within it hills, rivulets and little islands of its own. This amorphous land-

mass is constantly being sculpted into new dimensions and shapes by the Brahmaputra. Every year during the monsoon, the river submerges large tracts of land,

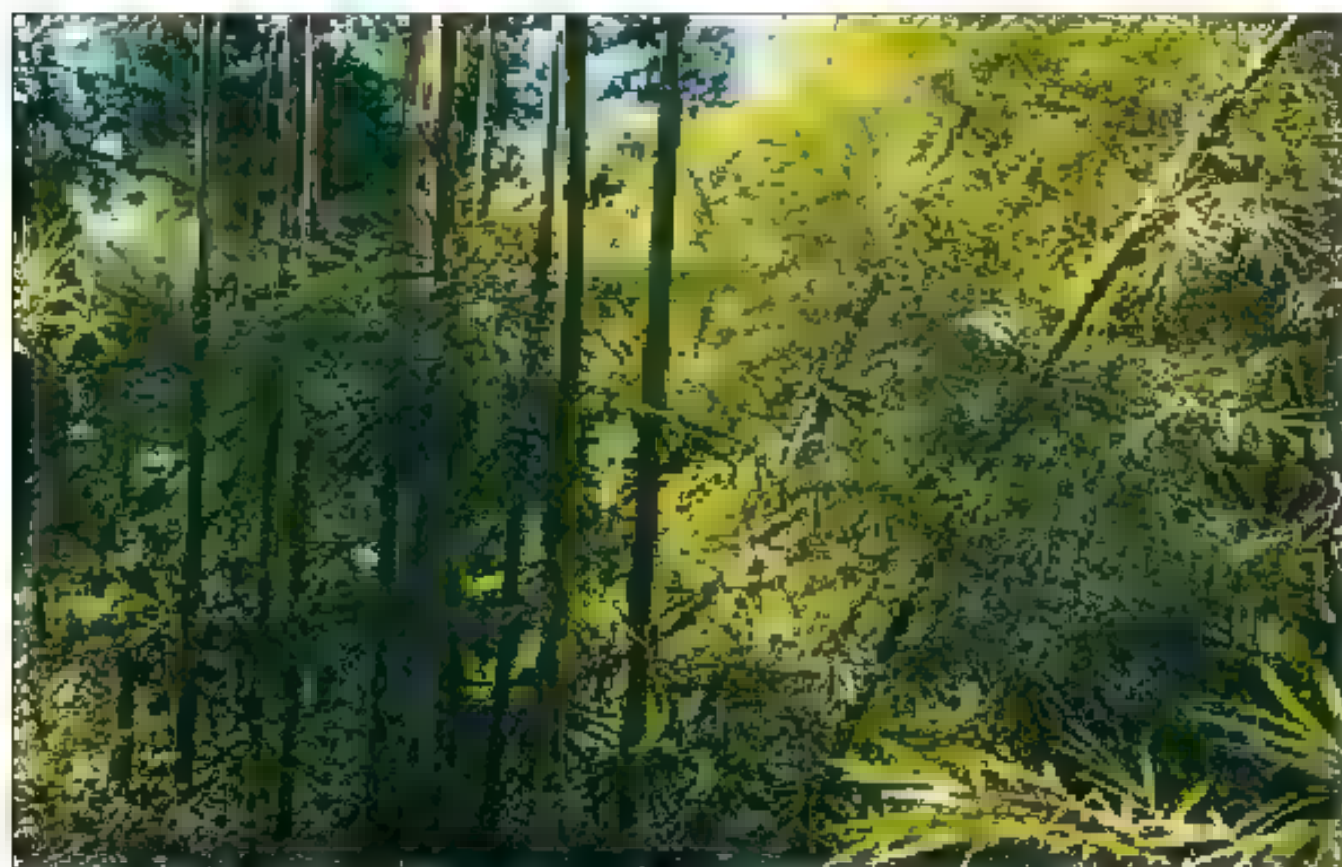
forcing the inhabitants to move to higher ground. After the floods recede, leaving behind fertile, freshly silted land, the people return to cultivate the area.

As interesting as Majuli's distinctive landscape are its *satras*, unique monasteries founded in the 15th century by the Vaishnavite reformer-philosopher, Shankardeva. The *satras* are rich repositories of traditional Assamese arts and crafts, and regularly stage dance-dramas in praise of Vishnu. Majuli's main settlement is at **Garamur** which has two *satras*. About 20 others are scattered across the island. Visitors can stay in the *satras* and should offer to make a donation towards overnight stays or meals.

Itanagar ❸

Papun Pare district 420 km (261 miles) N of Guwahati 35,000 Lakhimpur, 60 km (37 miles) NE of town centre, then taxi or bus Directorate of Tourism, Itanagar, (0360) 221 4745 **Travel permits** required (see p758)

Until it became the capital of Arunachal Pradesh in 1971, Itanagar was a settlement of the Nishi tribe, one of the largest among the 26 major tribes that inhabit the state. A



Bamboo forests in the vicinity of Itanagar, in Arunachal Pradesh

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp701-2 and pp730-31






Apatani woman in the rice fields near Ziro

few traditional Nishi long-houses still remain, now all but swamped by Itanagar's newly-constructed government buildings. The Nishis are easily recognizable – they sport black and white hornbill feathers in their cane head-gear, wear their hair in a bun on their foreheads and often carry bearskin bags.


The **Nehru Museum**, near the Secretariat, offers a comprehensive look at the arts and crafts of all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Cane and bamboo artifacts, textiles, jewellery,


and totem objects are on display here. A pretty but bumpy 6-km (4-mile) drive north from Itanagar leads to the lovely, emerald-green **Gyakar Sinyi Lake**, surrounded by dense forests. Many of the tall trees are festooned with orchids.

Nehru Museum

Siddharth Vihar **Tel** (0360) 221 2276.  **Sun–Thu.**  

Ziro

Lower Subansiri district, 150 km (93 miles) NE of Itanagar.  12,300 

 **Deputy Commissioner's Office**, (03788, 224 255. **Travel permits** required (see p758)

The picturesque town of Ziro in central Arunachal Pradesh, lies in a large, flat valley, surrounded by low pine-covered hills. This area better known as the Apatani Plateau, is the home of the prosperous Apatani tribe who

practise a unique system of cultivation that combines rice-growing with pisciculture. The flooded paddy fields are stocked with fingerlings – the two staples of Apatani diet thus coming from the same plot of land. Like the Nishis, the Apatanis wear their hair in a bun on their foreheads, head with a brass skewer. Both the men and women are tattooed

and the women sport huge bamboo noseplugs.

Northeast of Ziro, three other areas, **Daprijo**,

Along and **Pasighat** are

now open to foreigners (with permits). The latter two are situated on the Brahmaputra river and are inhabited by the Adi tribe (see p336). The drive from Ziro to Pasighat (300 km/186 miles) is wonderfully scenic, through dense virgin forest and tribal villages with thatched longhouses.



Adi longhouse near Along

Namdapha National Park

Changlang district, 380 km (236 miles) NE of Itanagar.  **Margherita**, 64 km (40 miles) SW of Miao, the entry point.  **Director, Project Tiger, Miao**, (03807, 222 249.  **Oct–Mar.**  **Travel permits** required (see p758)

This superb park in remote eastern Arunachal Pradesh bordering Myanmar, covers 1,985 sq km (766 sq miles). Rising from the plains to 4,500 m (14,764 ft) in the Himalayas, it covers a variety of habitats, and is the only reserve in India where all the four big cats of the Himalayas – tiger, leopard, clouded leopard and the rare snow leopard are found. It was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1983. Other wildlife includes the great Indian hornbill, the red panda (see p296), and the Hoolock gibbon (see p331).

Environ

The legendary Burma Road (or Stilwell Road) begins at **Ledo**, 60 km (37 miles) southwest of Miao. This 1,700-km (1,056-mile) road, of great strategic importance in World War II, connected Ledo, via the forbidding angles and mountains of Arunachal Pradesh and Northern Myanmar, to Kunming in China's Yunnan province. Supervised by the American General Joseph Stilwell and built in two years at enormous human cost, it has now fallen into disrepair, but is still used by locals travelling on foot.



Tribal people of eastern Arunachal Pradesh on the Burma Road



Locally made bamboo baskets on sale in Shillong's Bara Bazaar

Shillong ①

East Khasi Hills district 127 km (79 miles) S of Guwahati 132900

Meghalaya Tourism, 3rd Secretariat, Lower Lachumiere, (0364) 250 0736. Weiking Dance (April/May).

Capital of the tiny state of Meghalaya, Shillong, with its mist-shrouded hills, pine forests, lakes and waterfalls, is sometimes described as the "Scotland of the East". Lying at an altitude of 1,496 m (4,908 ft), it was chosen as the headquarters of the British administration in Assam in 1874. It soon developed into a popular hill station, providing refuge from the searing heat of the plains.

The town still retains a distinctly colonial ambience, with its mock Tudor bungalows, churches, polo ground and beautiful 18-hole golf course. It is also the home of the matrilineal Khasi tribe. The idyllic countryside around the town can be easily explored in short excursions.

Bara Bazaar

Bara Bazaar Rd. Mon-Sat
This sprawling market offers a vivid glimpse of Khasi tribal society. The stalls are piled high with produce from the surrounding villages – honey, pineapples, piglets, dried fish, wild mushrooms, raw betel nut and bamboo baskets. The market is dominated by Khasi women, who run most of the stalls. Dressed in their traditional tunic-like *jainsems* and tartan-checked shawls, these cheerful matrnarchs can drive a hard bargain.

Museum of Entomology

Umsohsun Rd. **Tel** (09863) 021965.

Mon-Sat Sun

This small private museum, situated north of Bara Bazaar, was established in the 1930s by the Wankhar family, and boasts a collection of rare butterflies and insects found in Meghalaya. Among them are huge stick insects, iridescent beetles, and the giant yellow and black crawling butterfly which cloaks itself in a deadly poison to protect itself from predatory birds. The family also runs a breeding centre for rare species.

Ward Lake & Lady Hydari Park

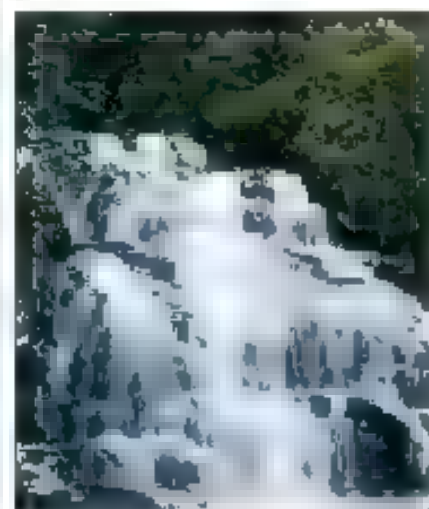
Park daily Sun extra charges.

In the centre of town, the horseshoe-shaped Ward Lake has pleasant promenade paths around it, paddle boats for hire and a café. A short distance to its south is Lady Hydari Park, with a pretty Japanese garden and a mini-

zoo which includes fauna native to Meghalaya's forests, such as hornbills, leopard cats, and the aptly named slow loris, a ferret-like creature that crawls around as though heavily drugged.

Environs

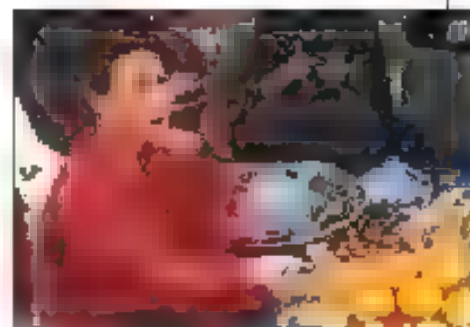
The beautiful **Bishop and Beadon Falls** are 3 km (2 miles) north of Shillong, just off the Guwahati-Shillong Highway. Along the same route, 17 km (11 miles) north of Shillong, is **Umiam Lake**, a large artificial reservoir set among forested hills. It offers facilities for angling, kayaking and waterskiing, and has an orchidarium in the adjacent park. The scenic **Elephant Falls** are 11 km (7 miles) south of Shillong. The road to **Mawphlang**, 29 km (15 miles) southwest of Shillong, is richly forested with pine and oak, and is a good place to see some of Meghalaya's rare species of orchids in their natural habitat.



The Elephant Falls, flowing over ferns and rocks

THE KHASIS

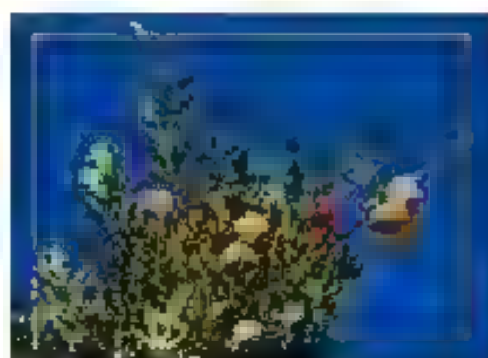
The Khasis are the predominant tribe in the Shillong area. Believed to have originated in Southeast Asia, their language belongs to the Mon-Khmer group. It is not known when they migrated to this region. Today, the majority of Khasis are Christians, their ancestors converted by British missionaries in the 19th century. Nevertheless, they retain many of their tribal customs. Chief among these is their matrilineal social structure, which dictates that landed property can only be inherited by females, with the youngest daughter given a special position as custodian of the family house and the clan's traditional rituals.



Khasi matriarch at her stall in Shillong's main market

Shillong to Cherrapunji Tour ⑫

The road to Cherrapunji through the East Khasi Hills winds through dense pine and oak forests, full of ferns and orchids. En route are dramatic gorges and ravines, waterfalls and limestone caves. Cherrapunji is one of the wettest places on earth, and established a world record of an incredible 2,621 cm (1,032 in) of rain in 1861. It continues to record an average rainfall of 1,143 cm (450 in) in the monsoon months of July to September.



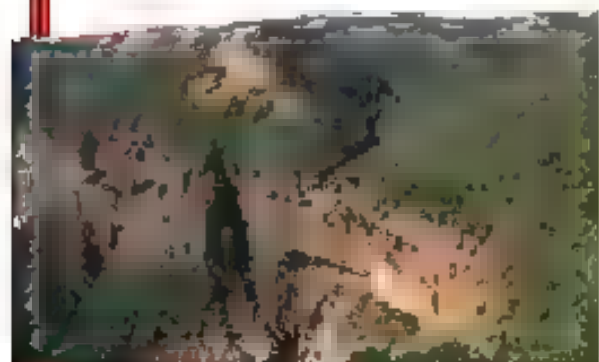
Cherrapunji's famous oranges

Shillong Peak ②

The highest point in Meghalaya at 1,965 m (6,447 ft), this peak is named after the Khasi deity Ushvylong.

Shillong ①

Ward Lake marks the centre of the town.



Cherrapunji ④

Surrounded by groves of orange and banana trees, this little town has a lively weekly market and is famed for its delicious orange-flower honey.

0 km 5
0 miles 5

Nohkalikai Falls ⑤

These are the second highest falls in India. Tall Khasi megalithic stones dot the area around them.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: 120 km (75 miles)

Stopping-off points: The tour takes between 6–7 hours. Shillong Peak, Cherrapunji (meats, toilets available), Nohsngithiang Falls, Nohkalikai Falls and Mawsmai Caves are the best places to stop.

Getting around: Meghalaya Tourism, (0364) 222 6054, and several travel agencies run daily tours from Shillong to Cherrapunji. Take a torch to explore the caves.

KEY

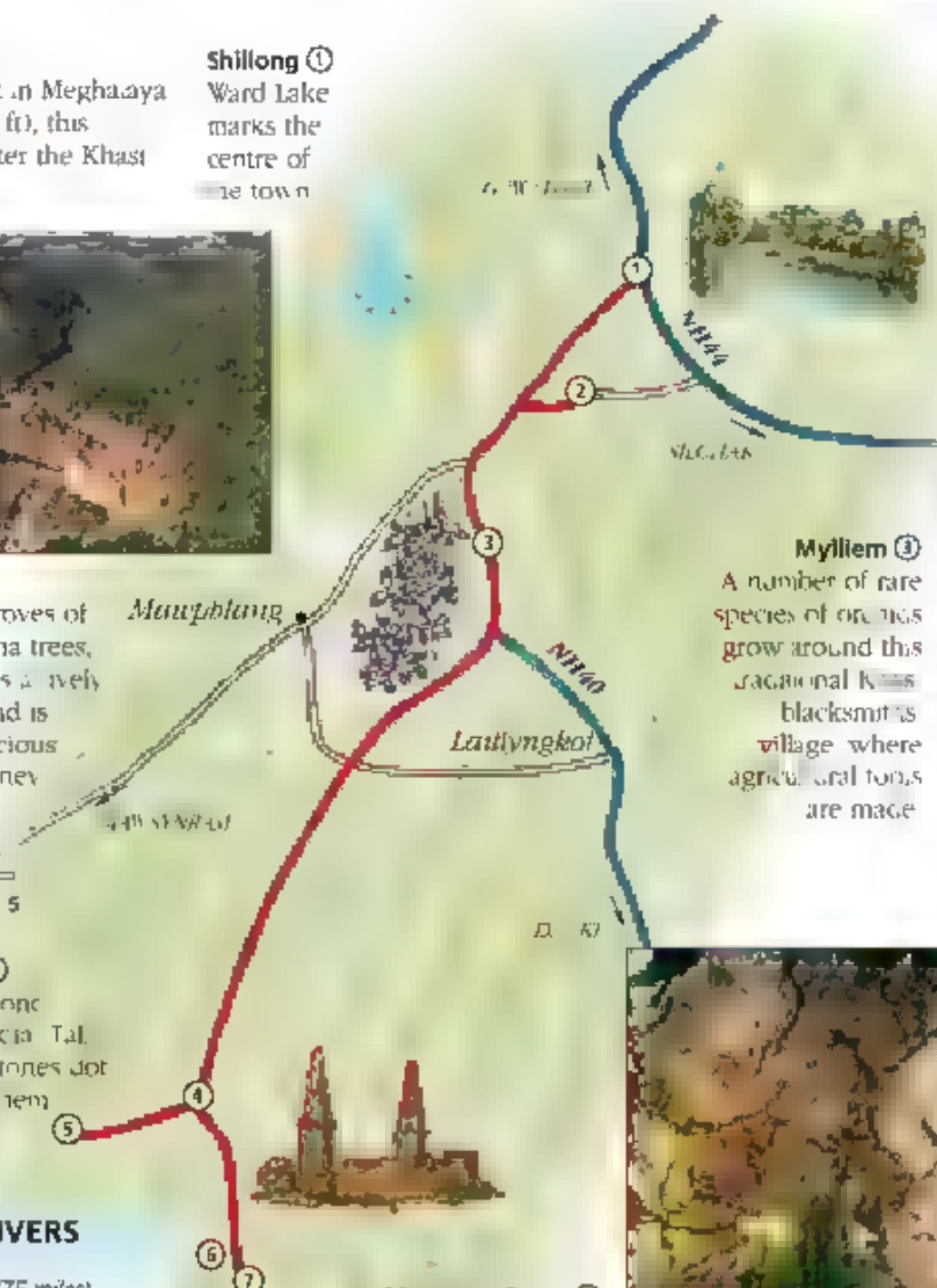
- Tour route
- Other roads
- National highway

Mawsmai Caves ⑥

Some of these limestone caves run more than 1 km (2 miles) deep.

Nohsngithiang Falls ⑦

On a clear day there is a fine view of the plains of Bangladesh from these impressive falls, also known as the Seven Sisters Falls.

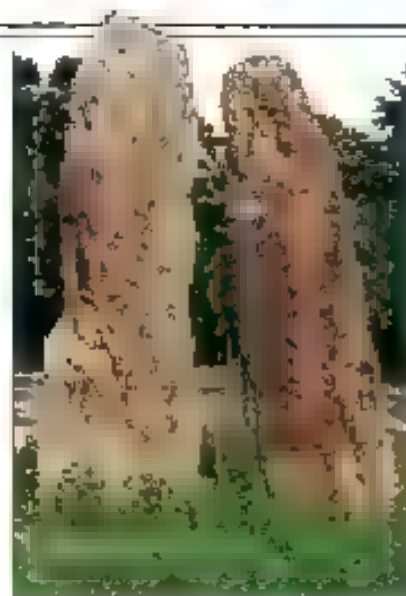


Tribal Peoples of the Northeast



Naga tribal basket

Northeast India is home to an extraordinary diversity of tribal peoples. Arunachal Pradesh alone has 26 major tribes, while Nagaland has 16. Dozens of others inhabit Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura. Though living in the same region, they have been geographically isolated from each other by steep mountain ridges, rivers and gorges, and have therefore retained their distinct cultural identities and languages.



Gigantic stone megaliths can be seen all over the state of Meghalaya. They were erected by the Khasi tribe as memorials to the dead.



Pipes of wood and metal are smoked by tribes in Arunachal Pradesh.



Intricate headwork, crafted by the Wanchos of Arunachal



The Aolis of Arunachal Pradesh are famous for their engineering skills and construct superb bridges, such as this tube of canework over the Brahmaputra river.



The Thankals of Manipur are skilled at weaving, producing a distinctive red and white textile with a silken sheen.

The Konyaks of Nagaland, who perform spirited martial dances, wear colourful costumes, with hornbill feathers, wild boar tusks and painted canework caps.





A chief's house 11

Nagaland has crossed gables and is decorated with his tribe's symbols. The mithun (bison species) skull in the foreground symbolizes power and prosperity.



This Naga chief used to be a beudhunter. The wooden beads on his basket indicate how many beads he took.

The Cheraw dance is performed at tribal festivals in Mizoram. The Mizos love music and dancing, and the Cheraw dance requires women to step agilely between rapidly moving bamboo poles.



Ujjayanta Palace in Agartala, built in 1901

Agartala 13

West Tripura district. 600 km (373 miles) S of Guwahati. 189,300. 12 km (7 miles) N of town centre, then bus or taxi. Tripura Tourism, Swet Mahal, Palace Compound, (0381, 222 3893).

The capital of Tripura, a former princely state bordered by Bangladesh. Agartala is a pleasant little town, its lush tropical greenery dotted with red-brick civic buildings. Dominating the town is the sprawling white **Ujjayanta Palace**, built in 1901 in Indo-Saracenic style. Now the State Legislature, the palace's opulent interior includes a tiled Chinese Room with a magnificent ceiling crafted by Chinese artisans. It is open to visitors when the Assembly is not in session. Tripura is renowned for its exceptionally fine cane and bamboo work, freely available in the market.



Cane basket from Tripura

Enviorns

Neermahal Water Palace. 55 km (34 miles) south of Agartala, on an island in Ruhrasagar Lake, was the summer home of the former maharajas of Tripura. Built in white marble and red sandstone, this fairy-tale palace has a profusion of pavilions, balconies, turrets and bridges, and part of it is open to the public. **Udaipur**. 58 km (36 miles) south of Agartala is renowned for the 16th-century **Tripurasundari Temple** with its distinctive Bengal-style roof.

Aizawl 14

Aizawl district. 480 km (298 miles) SE of Guwahati. 229,700. 35 km (22 miles) W of town centre, then bus or taxi. Mizoram Tourism, Bungkawn, (0389, 233 3475). **Travel permits** required (see p758).

Perched along a ridge, its houses and churches standing out against the green hillside. Aizawl is Mizoram's capital, and home of the Mizo tribes, said to have migrated here from Myanmar's Chin Hills 300 years ago. In the centre of town is the lively **Main Market**, where local farmers congregate. Almost the entire population of Mizoram (as of Nagaland and Meghalaya) is now Christian, converted by

missionaries who first came here in 1891. As a result of the schools they started, Mizoram has the second highest literacy rate in India. Blue jeans are more commonly seen today than tribal dress among the men, but the women still wear their elegant *puans* (long, narrow skirts). Visitors can see these being woven at the **Weaving Centre** in Luangmua, 7 km (4 miles) away.



Aizawl, stretching across a ridge



Fish sellers at Imphal's Ima Keithel

Imphal 15

Imphal district 484 km (301 miles) SE of Guwahati. ☎ 217,300

☒ 5 km (4 miles) S of city centre ☎

☎ Manipur Tourism, next to Hotel Imphal, (0385) 232 1285 ☎ Yaosang (Feb/Mar), Lai Haraoba (Apr/May)

Travel permits required (see p758)

The capital of Manipur (the 'Jeweled Land'), Imphal lies in a broad oval valley enclosed by forested hills. Its inhabitants mostly belong to the Meitei tribe. The liveliest part of the town is the **Ima Keithel** ('Mothers Market') where more than 3,000 women congregate daily to sell fresh produce, fish, grain, cane-work and handicrafts including the elegant striped



Manipuri dancer

textiles worn by the Meitei women. These formidable Imas, who sport *tikas* of sandalwood paste on their noses, have formed a powerful union and pride themselves on charging fair prices. Imphal's main temple, the **Govindaji Temple** stands east of the Bazaar and on festivals associated with Lord Krishna the graceful Manipuri dance (see p29) is performed here. **Sagol Kangjei**, Manipuri polo, is a favourite sport in Imphal (they claim to have invented the

game), and an opportunity to see a match should not be missed – the Polo Ground is in the centre of the town. It is a fast and furious game with the players dressed in dhotis and often riding bareback on the agile Manipuri horses. Two well-tended **Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries** are on the northern and eastern

outskirts of town. Buried here are the men who died fighting the Japanese during the invasion of Manipur in World War II. Also worth visiting is an impressive **Orchidarium** displaying various indigenous species. It is 12 km (7 miles) north of the town.

Enviroms

Moirang, 45 km (28 miles) south of Imphal, with its

ancient temple to the pre-Hindu god, Thangjing, is the spiritual home of the Meiteis, who celebrate **Lai Haraoba** (see p327). During World War II, Moirang was the headquarters of the Indian National Army (INA), led by Subhash Chandra Bose, which fought against the Allies.

Loktak Lake 16

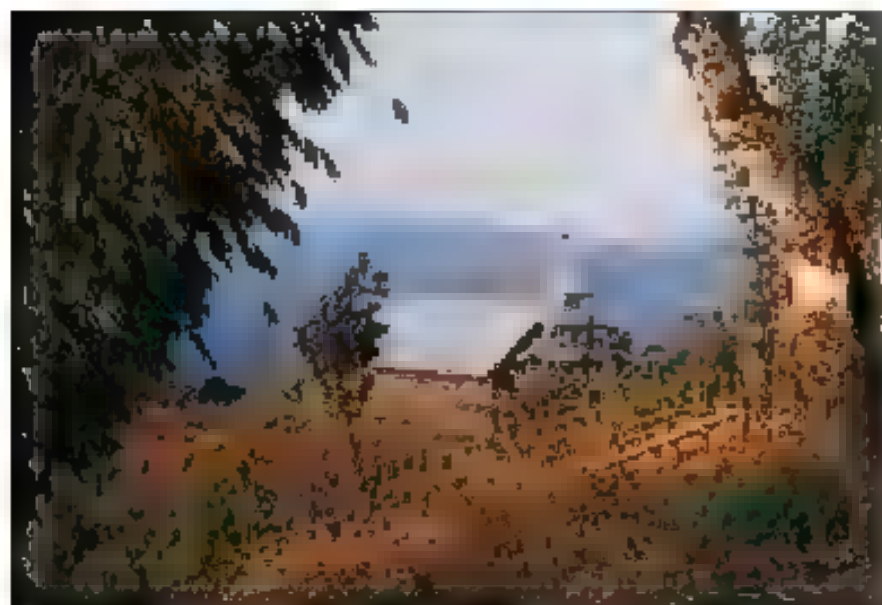
Bishnupur district 48 km (30 miles) S of Imphal. ☎ ☎ For bookings on Sendra Island contact Manipur Tourism, (0385) 232 1285 ☎ Travel permits required (see p758).

Loktak Lake is one of the most enchanting places in the northeast. Almost two-thirds of this huge expanse of fresh water is covered by unique floating saucer-shaped islands of reed and humus, locally called *phumdi*, which are home to a community of fishermen. The southern part of the lake forms the **Kelbul Lamjao National Park** where contiguous masses of *phumdi* form the very special habitat of the endangered Manipur brow-antlered deer called *sangai*. These deer have divided hooves specially adapted to their floating habitat, and elegantly curved antlers. Only a 100 or so of these graceful animals are now left, found in the wild only in an area of 6 sq km (2 sq miles) within the park. **Sendra Island**, at the heart of the park, provides a magnificent view of the lake, its islands and its rich birdlife.



Floating islands of reed and humus with fishermen's houses and moored boats, on Loktak Lake

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp701–2 and pp730–31



The Baptist Church in Kohima, one of many churches in the area

Boat rides are also offered. However, due to current political instability, only day-trips to Loktak Lake are possible.

Kohima 17

Kohima district, 339 km (211 miles) E of Guwahati. ☎ 78,600.

🚗 Dimapur, 74 km (46 miles) NW of Kohima, then taxi or bus. 📞 Nagaland Tourism, (0370) 224 3124. **Travel permits** required (see p758).

The capital of Nagaland, Kohima, at an altitude of 1,500 m (4,921 ft), is a small pleasant town surrounded by hills which are dotted with villages. Kohima is famous in World War II history for the decisive battle, fought on the terms court of the British deputy commissioner's house, that finally stopped the Japanese advance into India in April 1944.

Those who fell in the battle are buried in the beautifully kept **War Cemetery** covering a terraced hillside. A poignant inscription at the base of one of the two large crosses here reads, "When you go home tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow we gave our today". The **Cathedral of Reconciliation**, which overlooks the cemetery, was built in 1995, partly funded by the Japanese government.

Kohima's main bazaar is a good place to encounter the

handsome Naga people (see pp336–7) in their colourful woven shawls, who come from surrounding villages to sell their produce. The market also offers visitors a glimpse of the diet that supposedly made the Nagas such formidable warriors – bees larvae and dog meat are favourites.

The **State Museum**, 2 km (1.2 miles) north of the bazaar has an excellent anthropological collection of Naga masks, textiles, jewellery and totem pillars from all the 16 Naga tribes. Particularly intriguing



War Cemetery, Kohima

is a large ceremonial drum that looks like a dugout canoe, kept in a shed outside the museum. The drum is engraved with stylized waves, and has gongs that look like paddles. This and other factors, such as the use of seashells in their costumes, has led some anthropologists to conjecture

that the Nagas were originally a seafaring people, possibly from Sumatra. Today, a high percentage of Nagas are Christians and a church can be found in almost every corner of the state.

The original village of Kohima, **Bara Basti**, is a settlement of the Angami Naga tribe, located on a hill overlooking the town. Though now considerably modernized, it still has its ceremonial gateway, and a large traditional community house, the *morung*, with crossed horns surmounting its gable. A less

modernized Angami Naga village is **Khonoma**, 20 km (12 miles) southwest of Kohima, with its wooden houses, carved gateway and surrounding stone wall. The villagers are known for their agricultural skills – terraced paddy fields cover the hillside, growing 20 varieties of rice, and a system of bamboo pipes irrigates the fields.

State Museum

Tel (0370) 226 0133 ☐ Mon–Sat
🕒 public hols. 📞

Dimapur 18

Kohima district, 74 km (46 miles) NW of Kohima. ☎ 107,400. 📞

📞 Tourist Office, near Nagaland State Transport Office. **Travel permits** required (see p758).

This bustling town in the plains functions as a gateway to the rest of Nagaland. It was founded by the Kachari rulers, a Tibeto-Burmese people who were displaced from their territories in Assam in the 13th century by the invading Ahoms (see p332). Some of the ruins of their old capital can be seen in the heart of the town. Most notable are 30 carved megaliths, believed to be fertility symbols. About 5 km (3 miles) from the city centre on the road to Kohima, is the **Ruzaphema Bazaar** which displays a fascinating range of tribal handicrafts.



Carved megaliths in Dimapur erected by the Kachari kings





WESTERN INDIA



INTRODUCING WESTERN INDIA 342-349

RAJASTHAN 350-407

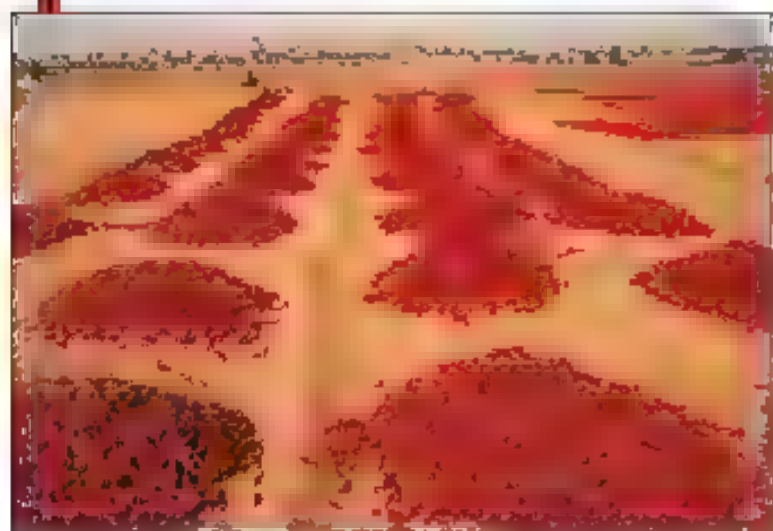
GUJARAT 408-431

Introducing Western India

This region has some of India's most popular destinations. In Rajasthan, the desert forts of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur, the palaces and lakes of Udaipur, and the Ranthambhore National Park evoke all the romance and splendour of the state's princely past. Gujarat's Jain temples and intricately designed stepwells are architectural marvels, while its natural wonders can be enjoyed on the beaches of Diu and at the lion sanctuary at Gir. The landscapes in this region range from the sand dunes of Rajasthan to the vast salt flats of Kutch, to the urban bustle of the two state capitals, Jaipur and Ahmedabad.



Rajasthani women in festive dress at the Pushkar Fair



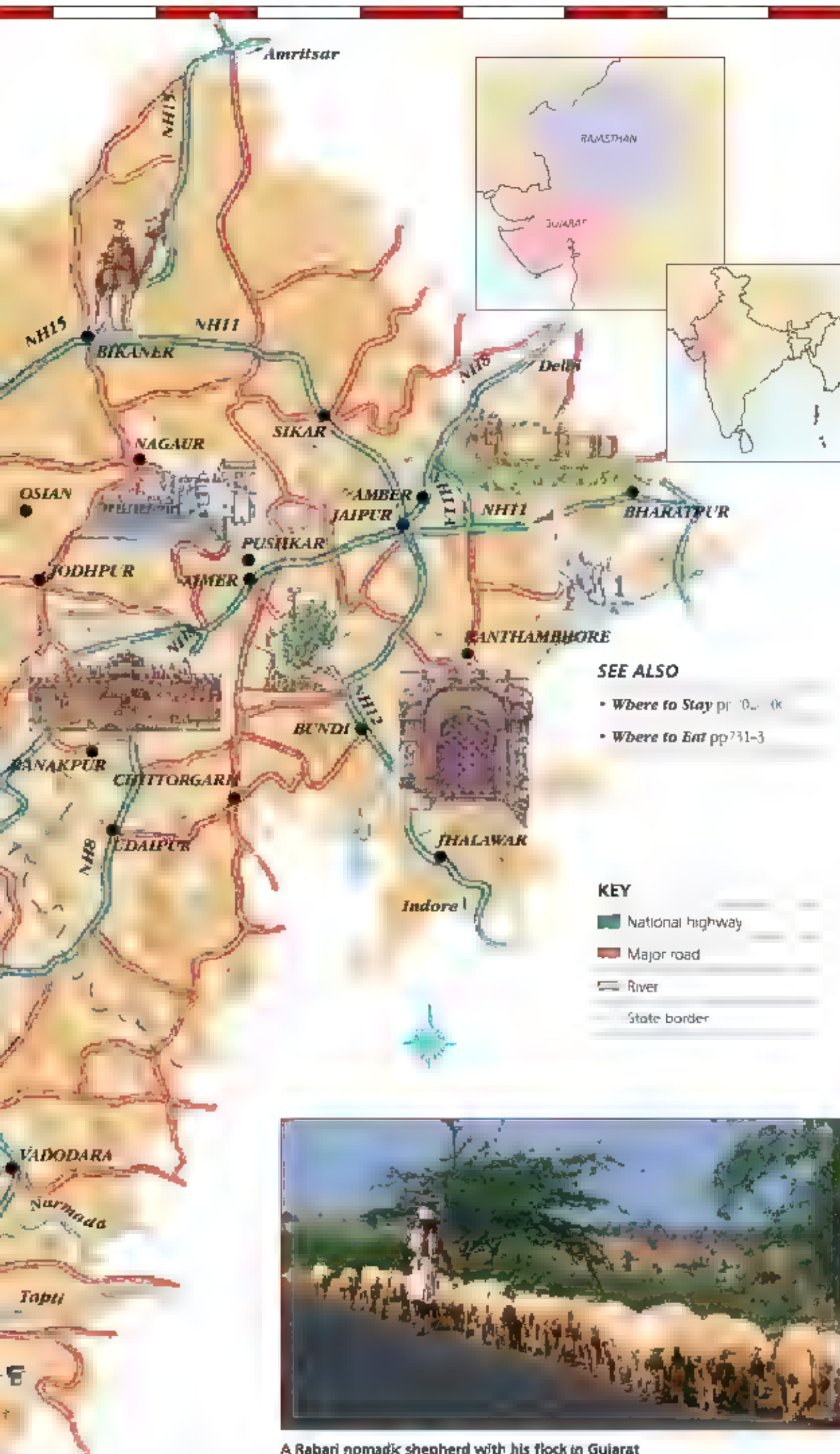
Chillies drying in the desert sun near Osian, Rajasthan

0 km 50
0 miles 50

GETTING AROUND

Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Ahmedabad are well-connected by air to Delhi and Mumbai as well as to each other. Trains travel between all the major cities, with fast trains connecting Delhi and Jaipur. Two luxury trains, the *Palace on Wheels* and the *Royal Orient* (see p777) offer a more romantic way to explore Rajasthan and Gujarat. Within Rajasthan, a network of national highways links most major destinations by road, while National Highways 8, 14 and 15 continue on to Gujarat.





SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* pp 10-11
- *Where to Eat* pp 231-3



A Rabari nomadic shepherd with his flock in Gujarat

A PORTRAIT OF WESTERN INDIA

The Great Thar Desert and the Arabian Sea have been two dominating influences in the history and culture of Rajasthan and Gujarat. Both these states have boundaries with Pakistan and, before 1947, contained a number of princely states. In most other respects, however, the two states are a study in contrasts.

A many-splendoured land of fairy-tale palaces and vibrant fairs and festivals, Rajasthan fulfills everyone's favourite fantasies about India. Until Independence in 1947 Rajasthan, literally "the Land of Kings", was indeed just that. It was made up of more than 20 princely states, bastions of royal opulence and feudal pageantry. They were ruled by Rajput clans such as the Kachhawahas of Jaipur, the Rathores of Jodhpur and the Sisodias of Udaipur. Their legacy has helped make the state one of the country's most popular tourist destinations.

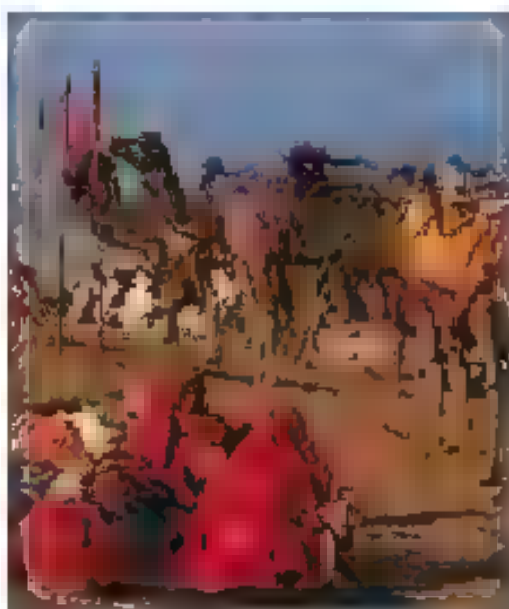
Today, Rajasthan's once-impregnable forts are open to visitors, and many of the old princely palaces and feudal castles have been converted into delightful hotels, often run by the erstwhile ruling families. Tourism has helped restore these historic buildings, and breathed new life into them. Apart from becoming successful hoteliers, many former princes have found new roles for themselves in politics, representing their constituencies in India's parliament. Rajasthan's traditional arts and crafts have also been revived, with tourists replacing maharajas as the new patrons.



A desert nomad's shelter in Rajasthan

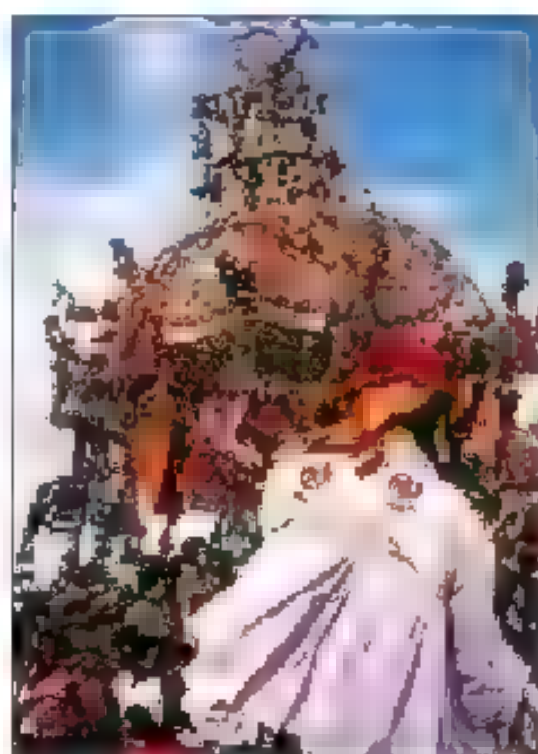
Eighty per cent of Rajasthan's population still lives in rural areas, engaged in agriculture and livestock herding. The rhythm of life in the villages continues much as it has for hundreds of years, the drudgery of the daily grind broken every few weeks by religious festivals and cattle fairs, such as those at Pushkar (see pp 374-5) and Nagaur (see p 376). These wonderfully colourful events provide Rajasthanis villagers with an occasion for feasting, socializing, trading, and enjoying traditional entertainments such as camel races and puppet shows. The fairs have become a major attraction for visitors as well, offering a close and memorable encounter with the people and culture of rural Rajasthan.

Rajasthani society is still socially very conservative, with great value placed on



Camels for sale at the Pushkar Fair

ancient feudal codes of conduct and honour. As recently as 1987, an incident of *sati* took place here, when a young widow burnt herself on her husband's funeral pyre, while the whole village watched in admiration. But things are changing: female literacy in Rajasthan, which was just 20 per cent in the early 1990s has increased at a



The Tarnetar Fair in Gujarat

massive growth rate, and women now head many village government councils. Rural development schemes have brought schools, hospitals and water to remote desert villages. What has still not changed, however, is the old-world courtesy and hospitality encountered everywhere in Rajasthan, be it in a princely palace or a mud hut in the desert.

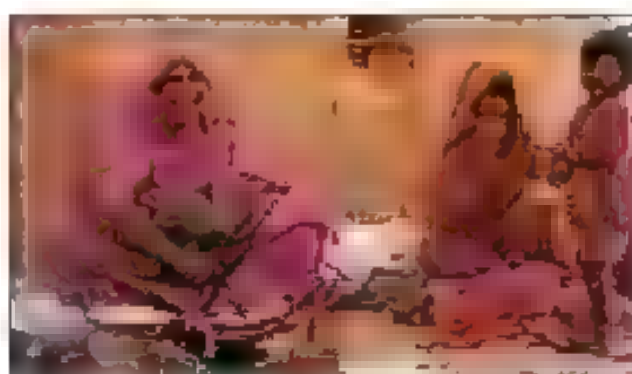
In sharp contrast with Rajasthan, Gujarat is one of the most industrially advanced and urbanized states in the country – nearly 60 per cent of its population lives in cities. The Gujaratis' legendary business acumen has helped make the state one of the most prosperous in India.

While the forbidding expanses of the Thar Desert had for centuries effectively insulated Rajasthan's society, Gujarat's 1,600 km (992 miles) of coastline on the Arabian Sea have helped foster contacts with other lands and cultures, and bred an adventurous spirit in the people. Since ancient times, Gujarat has traded with Arabs and Persians, East Africa, China, and Indonesia, through its ports at Surat (see p420) and Mandvi (see p429), while from the 15th century onwards European

traders established their bases along the coastline. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many Gujaratis sailed to far off lands in search of new opportunities, and today their descendants (many of them with the surnames Patel and Shah) are flourishing – be it as hoteliers in America, retail traders in Britain, industrialists in Nigeria or

lawyers in South Africa.

Gujaratis have been deeply influenced by Jainism (see p396), which took hold in the region in the 11th century, during the reign of the Solanki kings. Jainism's emphasis on non-violence, community service, simple living and high thinking was an integral part of the philosophy of Gujarat's most famous son, Mahatma Gandhi, who led India's struggle for independence (see p56). Ordinary mortals too try to follow this creed in their daily lives. Most Gujaratis, whether at home or abroad, are strict vegetarians, known for their toughness and self reliance, and for their thrift and philanthropy. These qualities were especially evident after the devastating earthquake that hit Gujarat in January 2001 (see p428), from which the state has made a remarkable recovery.



Rajasthani women preparing lunch

Forts and Palaces



Fort gate with spikes

The spectacular forts of Rajasthan were originally forbidding, defensive citadels, but by the mid 16th century when most Rajput states had made peace with the Mughals, luxurious palaces, pleasure pavilions and gardens were added to them, displaying many Mughal-inspired features. In the early 20th century there was another spate of palace-building in both Rajasthan and Gujarat. As a result of increasing contact between the British Raj and the princely states a marked European influence in both architecture and decor is visible in these palaces.



Cannons to defend the fort are mounted on the bastions, which tower high above the surrounding area.



Sileh Khanas (armouries) store a variety of weapons, from ceremonial jewelled swords to sharp knuckle-dusters, and even special armour for war elephants.



Entrance gates are high enough for elephants to pass through. Their doors have huge spikes to prevent enemy elephants from storming them.



Water reservoirs, often fed by underground springs, are found in forts in the arid areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat.



TYPES OF FORTS

Ancient Indian treatises list six types of forts for good defences. While *giri durgs* (hill forts) such as Chittorgarh are the most impregnable, other effective types are *dhanva durg*, protected by desert, such as Jaisalmer (see pp.388-9); *vana durg*, protected by forest, such as Ranthambhore (see p.406); *mahi durg*, protected by

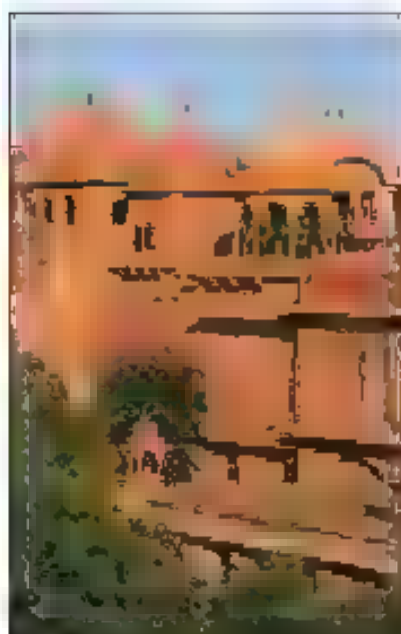


Ghagron Fort in Rajasthan, an example of a fort protected by water.

thick mud walls such as Bharatpur's Lohagarh (see p.367); *jala durg*, protected by water, such as Chagron (see p.403) and *nara durg*, a city fort such as Nagaur (see p.376) protected mainly by trusted men.

PALACES

Palaces built by maharajas during the Raj, unlike those in the old forts, had modern plumbing, drawing rooms and dining halls suitable for entertaining British dignitaries.



Lalgarh Palace in Bikaner (see p379) was built in 1902. It beautifully combines Rajput decorative features with European elements, such as banquet halls and billiard rooms.



Wankarner Palace (see p427) was built in 1907. The ruler's travels in Europe gave him a taste for Italianate pillars and Gothic arches, crowned here with Mughal pavilions.

Corridors and staircases, that connect the private chambers in Rajput palaces, are often narrow and twisting to confuse enemy invaders.

The Victory Tower was built in 1588 after a successful battle. Each of its nine storeys is a temple.

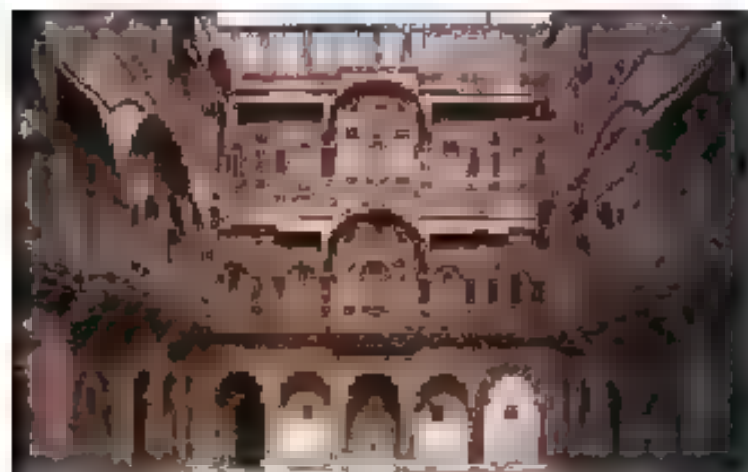


Temples were built by rulers and merchants, who believed their deities protected the fort.



FORTS

Chittorgarh (see p402), founded in AD 728 but added to at various times until the 16th century, is like many Rajput forts, built on a commanding height above the plains. Its massive ramparts enclose palaces, temples, stables and reservoirs.



Sheesh Mahals ("Halls of Mirrors") are ceremonial halls inlaid with mirror mosaic. One candle reflected in the myriad mirrors makes the whole room glitter.

Zenanas (women's quarters) have secluded courtyards and exquisite stone latticework (jalis) screens. These let in light and air yet maintain privacy. Most zenanas are large, because they also housed the ruler's main concubines.

The Flavours of Western India

Rajasthan, largely scrub and desert and dominated by hill forts of stone, has a simple cuisine dictated by the landscape and climate. As a result, the food here is more robust and strength-giving, as is evident by the creative use of cereals and lentils. The varied palate of Gujarat has emerged from its contact with the different communities who have settled in this state. What is commonly called Gujarati food is vegetarian with the regional variations of North and South Gujarat, Kathiawar and Kutch. It is a delicate balance of the spicy and sweet and its infinite variety of dishes can be sampled in the Gujarati *thali* (platter).



Bunch of fenugreek



An array of tangy savouries, very popular among Rajasthanis

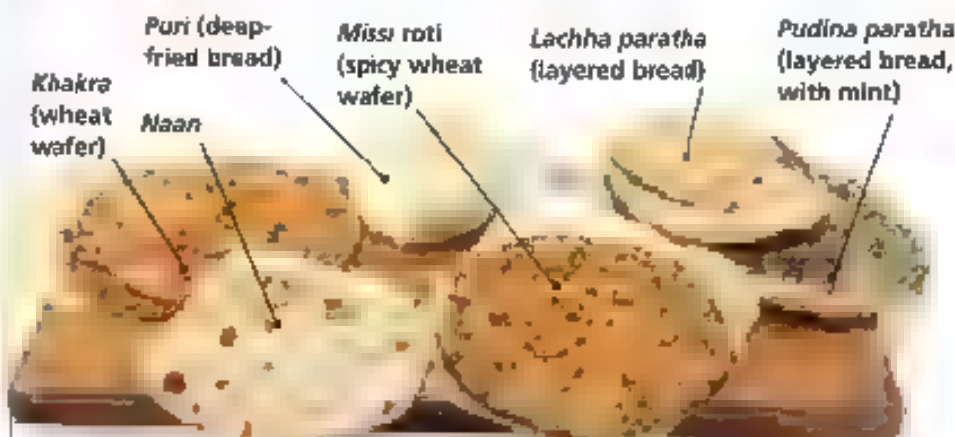
In the desert districts, milk *ghee* (clarified butter) and buttermilk are used to make up for the water scarcity. Other substitutes are *amchur* or dried mango powder, used instead of tomatoes, and *asafoetida* to enhance taste. Desert plants such as *sangri* (*Prosopis cineraria*) beans and *khair* (*Capparis decidua*) have great nutritional value. These are dried and cooked with oil and spices to make *khair-sangri*. Mint, turmeric, mango and garlic chutneys are popular accompaniments.

The cuisine of the martial Rajput clans includes highly seasoned meat dishes. The most famous is *lal maas*, a lamb dish cooked with *ghee* and red chilies. A variation is the *safed maas*, a "white" curry with yoghurt and nuts. *Khud kharosh* is a summer special, where rabbit is stuffed with spices, sealed in dough and roasted in cloth.

Spicy lentils, split peas, peanuts and puffed rice are used in crunchy savoury snacks, such as *bhujia*, *dal-moth* and *khatta-meeha sei*.

RAJASTHAN

The best-known dish here is *aal-baati*, a lentil curry with wheat-dough balls which can be buried in the sand to bake. The same *baati*, when crumbed and garnished with raisins and almonds, is transformed into a rich sweet called *chorma*. This food can be carried for days through the parched landscape.



A selection of breads from Rajasthan and Gujarat

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES



Khandvi and dhokla

Vegetarian food dominates the cuisine of Rajasthan and Gujarat, both states having been strongly influenced by Jainism and Vaishnavism, which forbid animal slaughter. Rajasthan's cereal-based diet includes *kadbi* (lentil and yoghurt soup), types of *khichdi* (rich rice preparations) and breads made from *bajra* (millet) and *jowar* (sorghum maize). Gujarati cuisine uses a wide range of protein-rich lentils, cereals and vegetables, distinguished by wonderfully subtle seasoning. Pickles, often made of *kairi* (green mango), are a basic part of it. Sweets include the seasonal *aamras* (mango fool) and *doodh pak*, made with thick sweetened milk, dried fruit and nuts.



Undhiyo, a Gujarati thali dish, consists of potatoes and aubergines (eggplant) roasted in an earthenware pot



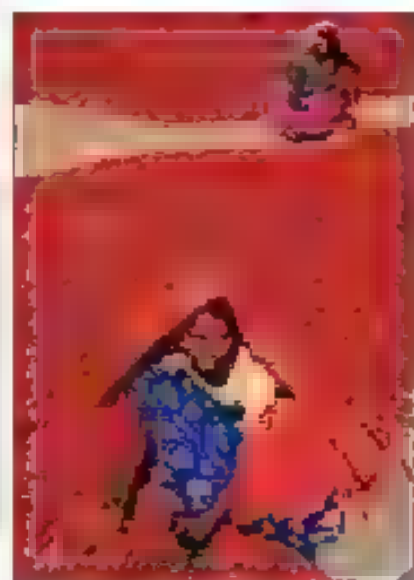
Women selling fresh vegetables in a Rajasthan village

GUJARAT

Gujarat has a large Jain community who, as practitioners of non-violence, have developed an extremely refined vegetarian cuisine rated as one of India's most sophisticated. A typical *thali* contains innumerable small bowls (*katoris*), filled with vegetables, lentils, *farsaans* (savoury snacks), pickles, chutneys, breads and sweets. This meal allows a person to savour the delicate balance of flavours – sweet and sour, salty and spicy, crisp and soft, low fat and deep-fried.

Bajra (millet) is the staple grain of Gujarat and is used to make the *rotlis* (baked bread) that are eaten with most meals. Another bread is *thepla*, a savoury griddle-bread made from chickpea flour. Rice specialties, such

as *khubdi* (a nourishing mixture of rice and five kinds of lentils), *vangi bhat* (rice with aubergines and coriander) and *masala bhat* (spicy rice) are made more tempting by the addition of a dollop of *ghee* at the end.



Young girls gathering red chillies that have been sun-dried

Jaggery or sugar is used to sweeten every dish and the food is usually seasoned with mustard, asafetida and fenugreek, used both for flavour and digestion.

Integral to a meal are crisp *farsaans*, particularly *dhokla* (steamed spongy cakes of chickpea flour and yoghurt), *khandvi* (chickpea flour rolls filled with coriander), *mirchi pakora* (green chilly fritters) and *khakra* (wafers).

Saurashtra is famous for pickles and *methua masala* made from powdered fenugreek, chillies and salt and used as a salad dressing. While from the bakeries of Surat come wonderful local biscuits, *nankhatais*.

ON THE MENU

Batata nu shak A dry spicy potato preparation.

Besan halwa A sweet made from chickpea flour.

Dahi pakora Lentil dumplings in yoghurt.

Kadhi A light curry made with chickpeas and lentils.

Makki soyta Corn kernels in a spicy sauce.

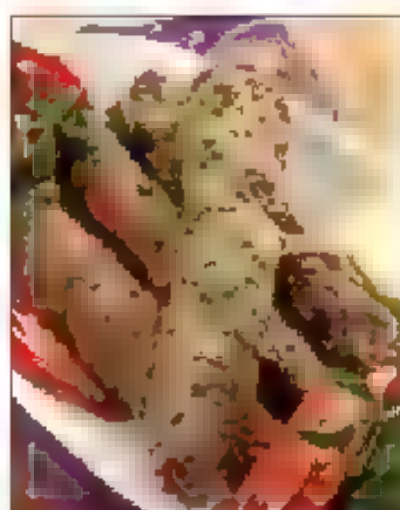
Mattar ki kachori Fried bread stuffed with peas.

Mula ni kadi Yoghurt curry with white radish.

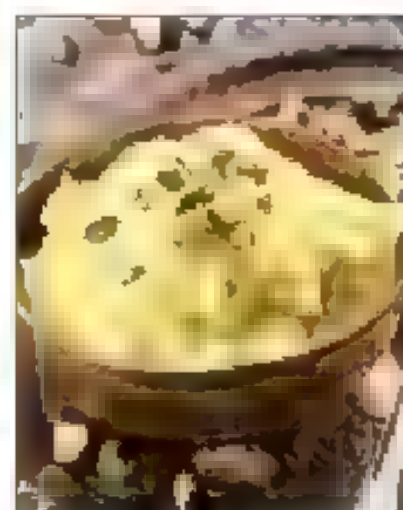
Paunk Mixed vegetables seasoned with lime and jaggery – a winter dish.



Gatta curry has steamed dumplings made from chickpea flour cooked in a spiced yoghurt sauce.



Sulas, a specialty of Rajput clans, is barbecued meat softened with a paste made from a melon-type fruit.

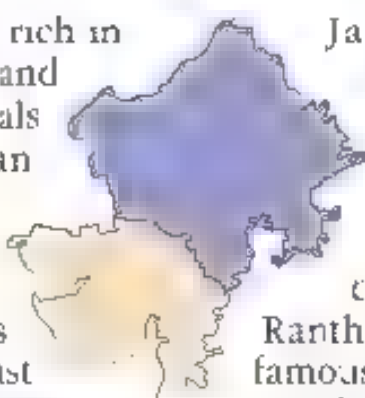


Shrikhand is a dessert made from yoghurt flavoured with saffron, cardamom, nuts and dried fruits.



RAJASTHAN

No state in India is as rich in magnificent palaces and forts, colourful festivals and bazaars, as Rajasthan. Stretching over 342,000 sq km (132,047 sq miles), the state is bisected by the Aravalli Range, which runs diagonally from the northeast to the southwest. Its main river is the Chambal. The Thar Desert, which covers western Rajasthan, was once ruled by three great kingdoms.



Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Bikaner. Shekhawati, with its painted *havelis*, is in the semi arid north while the eastern plains have the bustling state capital, Jaipur, and the Ranthambhore National Park, famous for its tigers. In the hilly wooded south are the fairy tale palaces, lakes and forts of Udaipur and the spectacular Jain temples at Ranakpur and Dilwara in Mount Abu.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns, Cities & Districts

Ajmer 1
Alwar 2
Barmer 10
Bharatpur 3
Bikaner 11
Bundi 29
Dungarpur 12
Jaipur 1
Jaisalmer 17
Jhauwar 18
Jodhpur 13
Kota 25
Nagaur 14
Phalodi 26
Shekhawati 8
Udaipur 23

Forts & Palaces

Amer Fort 7
Chittorgarh 27
Deeg 5
Kumbhagarh 22

Temples & Holy Places

Pushkar 40
Ranakpur 31

Hill Stations

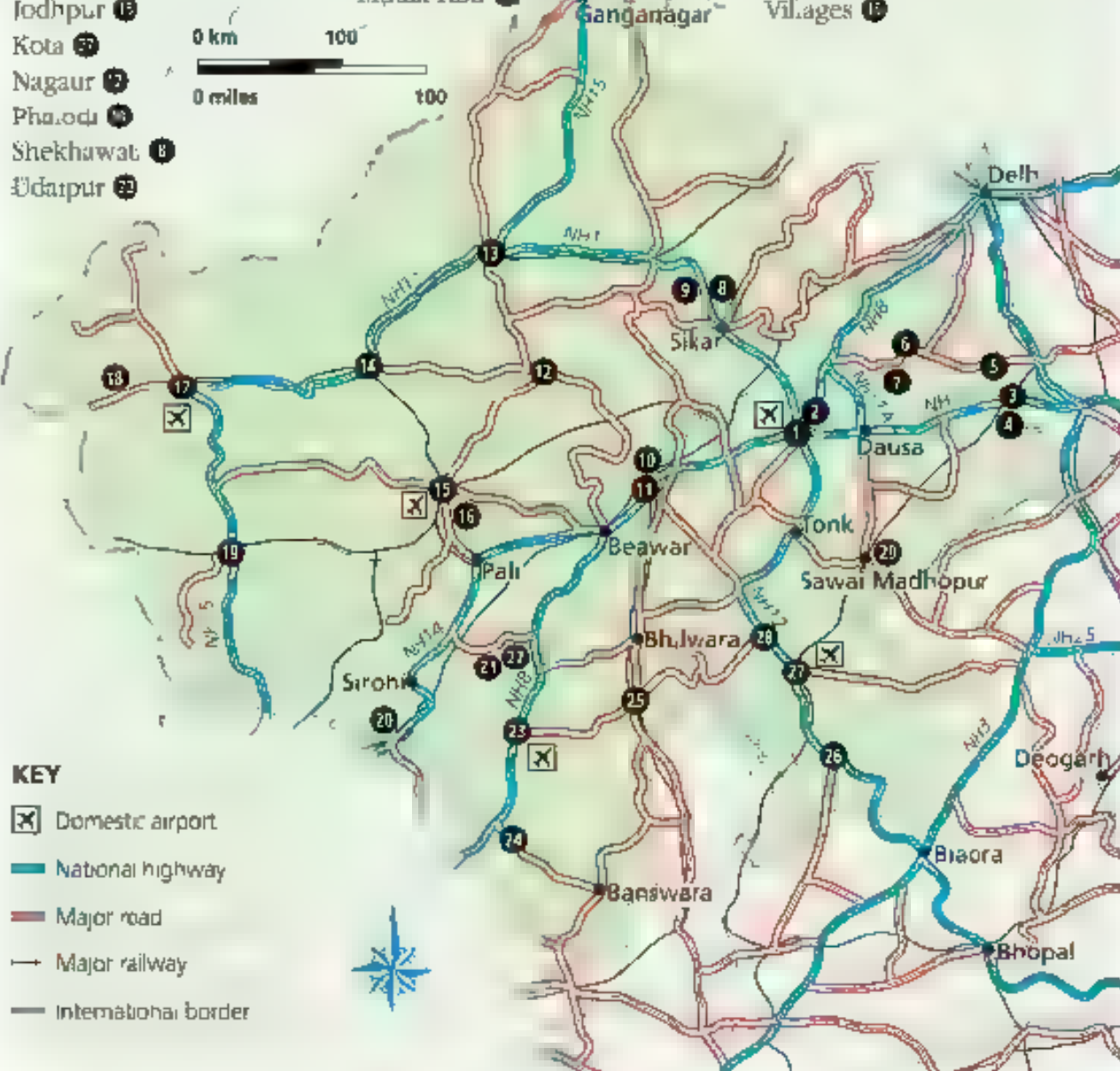
Mount Abu 20

National Parks

Keoladeo Ghana National Park 3
Ranthambhore National Park 29
Sariska National Park 6

Tours

A Tour of Shekhawati 9
Camel Safari around Jaisalmer 16
Tour of Marwar Crafts Villages 15



Jaipur ❶



Stone guardian
at Hawa Mahal

A labyrinth of fascinating bazaars, opulent palaces and historic sights, Jaipur is often called the "Pink City" because its prominent buildings are washed in this colour. Tradition and modernity exist side by side here. On its colourful streets, motorbikes jostle for space with camels, and turbaned village elders rub shoulders with youngsters in jeans. Jaipur's old walled area has the City Palace, an astronomical observatory and bazaars that sell everything from shoes to jewellery. Recent additions include a multi-arts centre, but the focal point remains the Hawa Mahal.

City Palace Museum

See pp356–7

Govind Dev Temple

Jaleb Chowk (behind City Palace)

☐ daily ☑ Holi (Mar), Janmashtami (Aug/Sep), Annakut (Oct/Nov)

The presiding deity of this musical temple is the flute-playing Lord Krishna (also known as Govind Dev). The image of this god originally came from the Govindeoji Temple in Brindavan (see p179). It was brought to Amber (see pp364–5) then the capital of Jaipur's ruling family, in the late 17th century to save it from the iconoclastic zeal of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

It is believed that this temple was once a garden pavilion called Suraj Mahal where Sawai Jai Singh II lived while his dream-city, Jaipur, was being built. Legend has it that one night the king awoke from his sleep to find himself in the presence of Krishna who demanded that his *devasthan* ("divine residence")

be returned to him. Jai Singh then moved to the Chandra Mahal at the opposite end of the garden and installed the image as the guardian deity of Jaipur's rulers.

Just behind the temple is the 18th-century **Jai Niwas Bagh**, a Mughal-style garden with fountains and water channels. Towards the north is the Bada Mahal, an enchanting hunting pavilion.

Chaugan Stadium

Brahmpur ☐ daily

This large open area near the City Palace derives its name from *chaugan*, an ancient Persian form of polo played with a curved stick. The area was once used for festival processions and wrestling matches, as well as elephant and lion fights. Today the stadium, with its viewing pavilions,



Govind Dev Temple, dedicated to Krishna

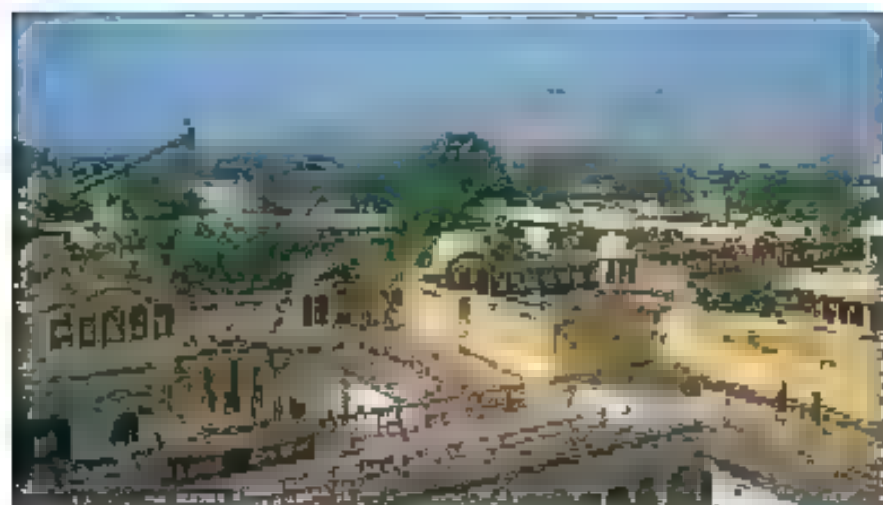
is the venue for the famous Elephant Festival (see p371), held at the same time as the Holi celebrations.

Hawa Mahal

Sireh Deon Bazaar Tel (0141) 266 8862 ☐ daily ☑ public hols. ☑

☑ extra charges ☑

A whimsical addition to Rajasthan's rich architectural vocabulary, the fanciful Hawa



A view of the walled city of Jaipur

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE








- Chaugan Stadium ③
- City Palace Museum ①
- Government Central Museum ⑤
- Govind Dev Temple ②
- Hawa Mahal ④
- Jantar Mantar ⑥

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp702–5 and pp731–2

Mahal or "Palace of Winds" was erected in 1799 by the aesthete Sawai Pratap Singh (1778–1803). Its ornate pink façade has become an icon for the city. The tiered Baroque-like composition of projecting windows and balconies with perforated screens is five storeys high but just one room deep; its walls not more than 20 cm (8 inches) thick. Built of lime and mortar, the structure was designed in this way to enable the veiled ladies of the harem to observe unnoticed the

vely street scenes below. Dedicated to Lord Krisna, the Hawa Mahal, seen from afar, looks like the *mukut* (crown) that often adorns the god's head. Visitors can climb up the winding ramp to the top, and a gateway towards the west leads into the complex. Within are administrative offices and the **Archaeological Museum**, which houses a small collection of sculptures and local handicrafts, including some utensils dating back to the 2nd century BC.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Jaipur district, 261 km (162 miles)
SW of Delhi.  2, 3 & 500
 15 km (9 miles), S of city
centre  
 Paryatan Bhavan, Mirza
Isma'il Rd, (0141, 511 0598
 Mon-Sat  Kite Flying
Festival (14 Jan), Elephant Festival
(Mar), Gangaur (Mar/Apr),
Teel (Jul/Aug).

III Government Central Museum

Ram Niwas Bagh **Tel** (0141) 256
5124  Sat–Thu.  public hots
 free on Mon

Also known as Albert Hall, this grand, multi-layered museum was designed by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, a master of the Indo-Saracenic style (see p22).

The museum's ground floor displays decorative shields, embossed salvers and local glazed pottery. A 9-m (30-ft) long *phad* (painted cloth scroll) depicts the life of Pabuji, a 14th-century folk hero (see p.381). The museum's greatest treasure, however, is one of the world's largest Persian garden carpets (dating from 1632). It can be viewed on request in the Durbar Hall. Presently the museum is closed for renovation. Contact the curator on the exact date of opening.



Caparisoned elephant at a festival

**Jantar
Mantar**

See pp358-9



KEY

 Street-by-Street area. see pp.354–5

Key to Symbols see back flap

THE BUILDING OF JAIPUR



Sawai Jai Singh II
(c.1700–43)

Sawai Jai Singh II was a keen scholar, statesman and patron of the arts. He was awarded the title of "Sawa," ("one-and-a-quarter"), a metaphor for one who is extraordinary, by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb when he was just 11 years old. With the help of a gifted Bengali engineer, Vidyadhar Chakravarty, Jai Singh built a new capital south of Amber and named it Jaipur ("City of Victory"). Work began in 1727 and took six years to complete.

Surrounded by a crenelated wall pierced by seven gates, Jaipur is laid out in a geometric grid of streets and squares and is one of India's finest examples of a planned city.

Street-by-Street: Around Badi Chaupar

The Badi Chaupar ("Large Square") is at one end of the colourful Tripolia Bazaar. Few changes have been made to the original 18th-century plan of streets and squares. Branching out of the main streets are narrow pedestrian lanes where artisans fashion puppets, silver jewellery, and other local handicrafts in tiny workshops. Behind are the *havelis* of eminent citizens, some used as schools, shops and offices. The area is a hub of activity, rich with pungent smells and vibrant colours, with temple bells adding to the cacophony of street sounds.



★ Jantar Mantar

Jai Singh II's observatory of astronomical instruments looks like a series of futuristic sculptures (see pp358–9)



Ishwar Lat

Ishwari Singh built this tower in 1749 to commemorate his victory over his stepbrother Madho Singh I



Tripolia Gate

Constructed in 1734, this impressive gate was once the main entrance to the palace

City
Palace

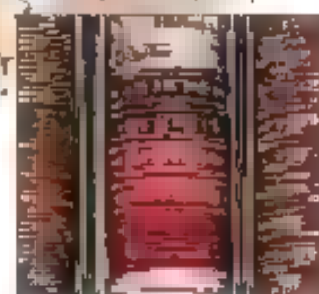
Chhoti Chaupar

("Small Square") leads to Kishanpol Bazaar, famous for its shops selling rose-, saffron-, almond- and vetiver-flavoured sherbets



Flower Sellers

Marigolds and other flowers are made into garlands and used as offerings to beloved deities in temples and roadside shrines



Lac Bangles

Maniharon ka Rasta is full of tiny workshops of lac bangle makers



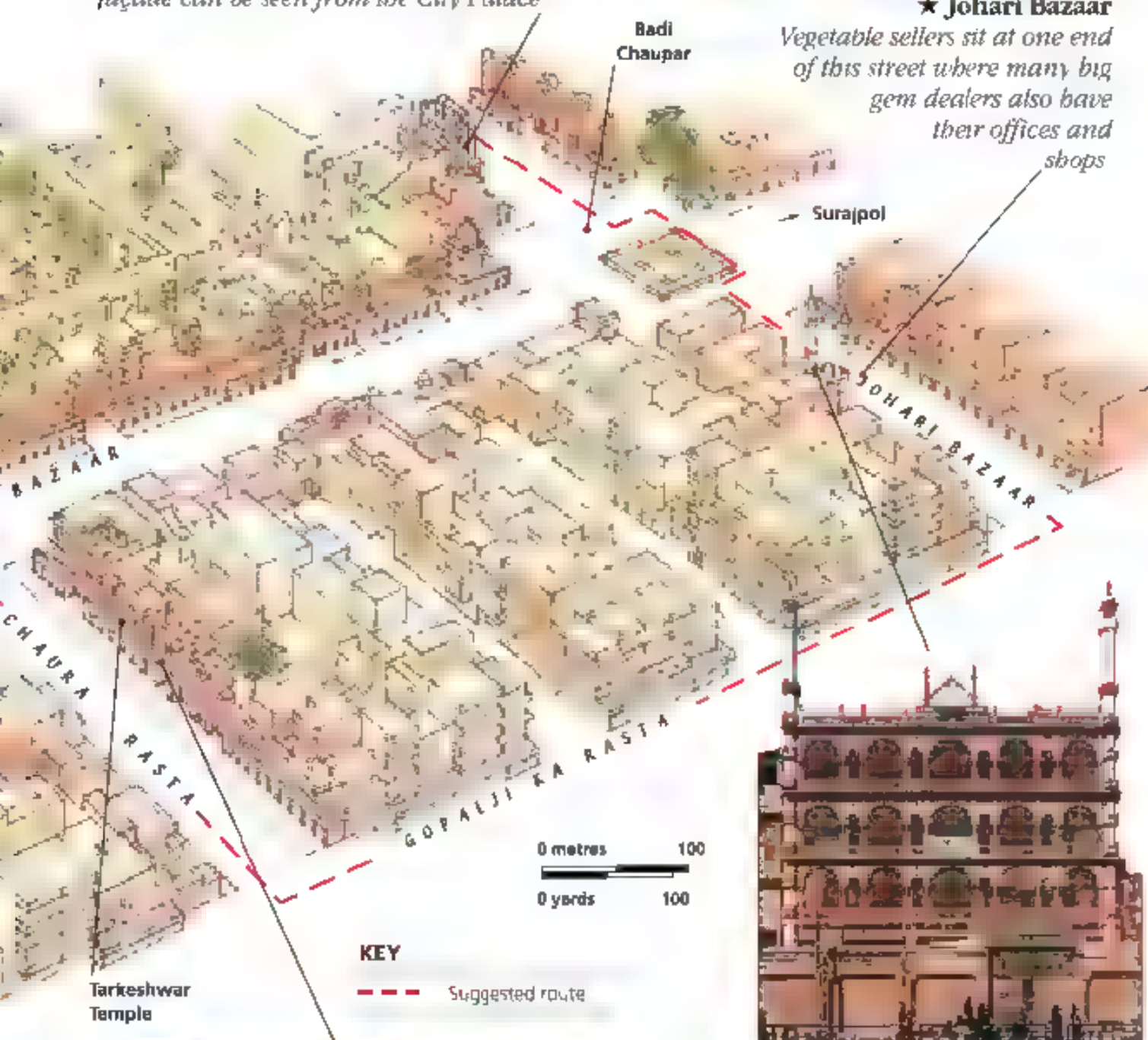
★ **Hawa Mahal**

A view of Hawa Mahal's unusual rear façade can be seen from the City Palace



★ **Johari Bazaar**

Vegetable sellers sit at one end of this street where many big gem dealers also have their offices and shops



★ **Jami Masjid**

Tall minarets define the "Friday Mosque", its three storeys fronted by arched screens



★ **Pottery Shop**

Large terracotta urns, pots of all sizes, bells, statues, foot scrapers and oil lamps made by traditional craftsmen are sold here

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Jantar Mantar
- ★ Hawa Maha
- ★ Johari Bazaar

Jaipur: City Palace Museum



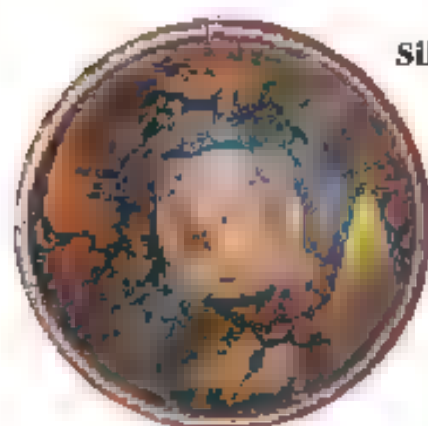
Jaipur's coat of arms

Occupying the heart of Jai Singh II's city, the City Palace has been home to the rulers of Jaipur since the first half of the 18th century. The sprawling complex is a superb blend of Rajput and Mughal architecture, with open, airy Mughal-style public buildings leading to private apartments. Today part of the complex is open to the public as the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, popularly known as the City Palace Museum. Its treasures, which include miniature paintings, manuscripts, Mughal carpets, musical instruments, royal costumes and weaponry, provide a splendid introduction to Jaipur's princely past and its fascinating arts and crafts.



★ Pritam Chowk

The "Court of the Beloved" has four delicately painted doorways representing the seasons.



Sileh Khana

The erstwhile armoury houses the museum's collection of weapons, among the finest in India. Some pieces, such as this shield, are lavishly decorated.

Crafts demonstration area



★ Mubarak Mahal

The first floor of this sandstone palace houses a dazzling collection of royal costumes and textiles, such as this gossamer-fine gold-embroidered skirt.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Pritam Chowk
- ★ Mubarak Mahal
- ★ Rajendra Pol
- ★ Silver Jris



★ Rajendra Pol

Flanking this gateway are two large elephants, each carved from single blocks of marble.

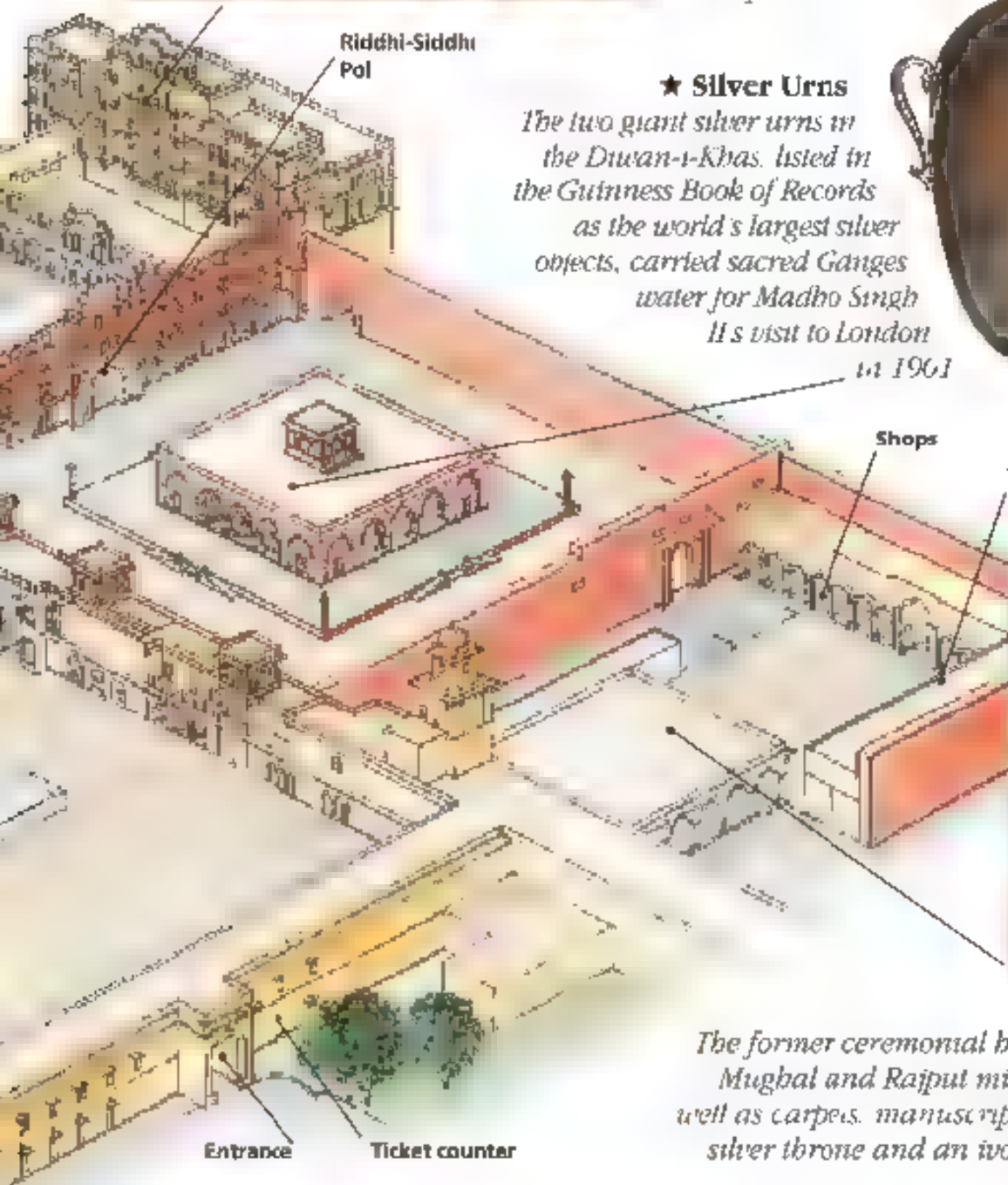


Chandra Mahal

Each floor of this seven-storeyed palace is extravagantly decorated and has a specific name according to its function. The palace is closed to the public.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

City Palace Complex Tel (0141) 260 8055. ☐ daily ☒ public hols. ☒ Museum and Jaigarh Palace only ☒ façades only. extra charges for video photography
☒ ☒ Crafts demonstration area ☐ daily ☒ public hols.



★ Silver Urns

The two giant silver urns in the Diwan-i-Khas, listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's largest silver objects, carried sacred Ganges water for Madho Singh II's visit to London in 1901.

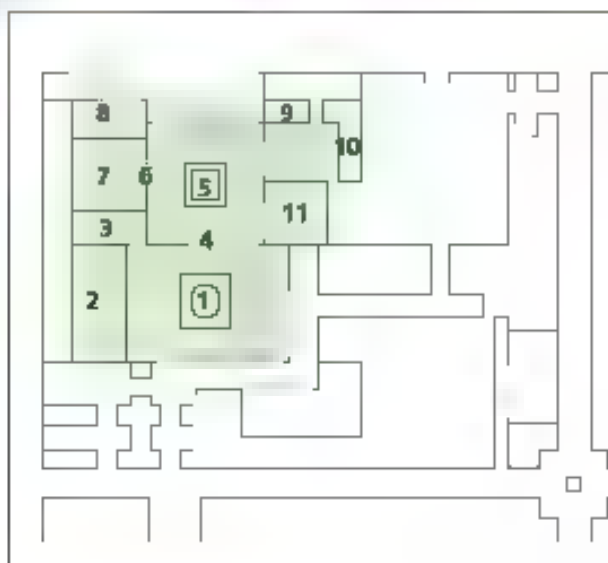


Transport gallery



Diwan-i-Aam

The former ceremonial hall now displays rare Mughal and Rajput miniature paintings, as well as carpets, manuscripts, a superbly crafted silver throne and an ivory elephant howdah.



THE CITY PALACE

- 1 Mubarak Mahal
- 2 Crafts Demonstration Area
- 3 Seen Khana
- 4 Rajendra Pol
- 5 Diwan-i-Khas
- 6 Riddhi-Siddhi Pol
- 7 Pritham Chowk
- 8 Chandra Mahal
- 9 Shops
- 10 Transport Gallery
- 11 Diwan-i-Aam

KEY

☐ Area illustrated

0 metres 200
 0 yards 200

Jaipur: Jantar Mantar



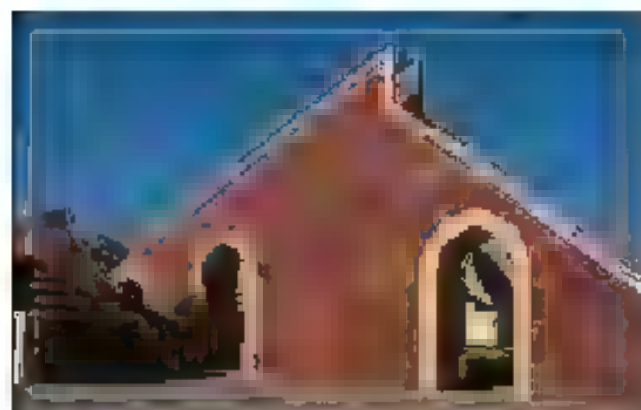
**Kantivrita
Yantra**

Of the five observatories built by Sawai Jai Singh II, the one in Jaipur is the largest and best preserved, the others are in Delhi (see p78), Ujjain, Mathura and Varanasi. A keen astronomer himself Jai Singh kept abreast of the latest astronomical studies in the world, and was most inspired by the work of Mirza Ulugh Beg the astronomer-king of Samarkand. Built between 1728 and 1734 the observatory has been described as "the most realistic and logical landscape in stone" its 16 instruments resembling a giant sculptural composition. Some of the instruments are still used to forecast how hot the summer months will be, the expected date of arrival, duration and intensity of the monsoon, and the possibility of floods and famine.



Narivalaya Yantra

Inclined at 27 degrees these sundials represent the two hemispheres and calculate time by following the solar cycle



Laghu Samrat Yantra

This "small sundial" is constructed on Latitude 27° North (Jaipur's latitude) and calculates Jaipur's local time up to an accuracy of 20 seconds

Unnatansha Yantra

was used to determine the positions of stars and planets at any time of day or night



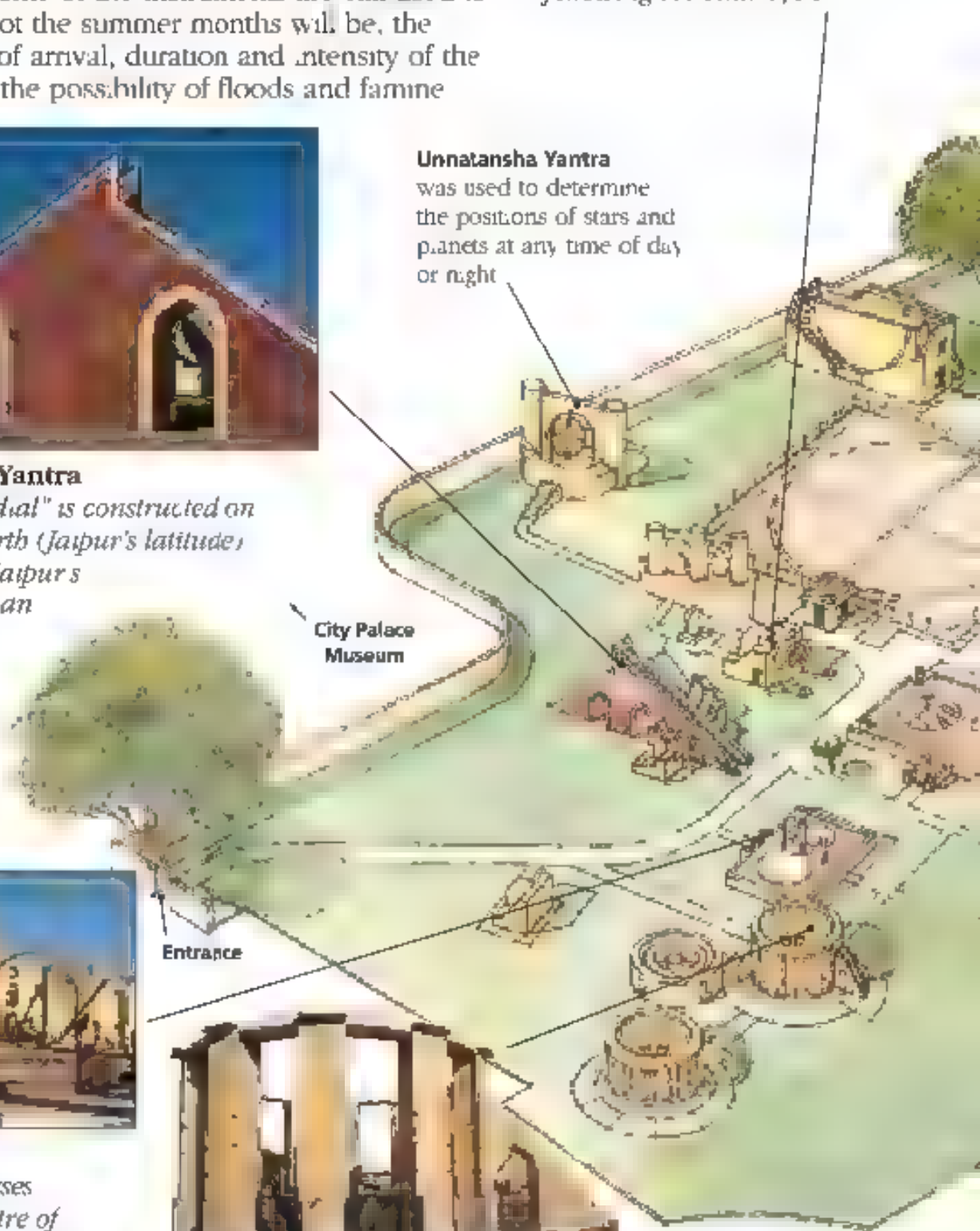
Chakra Yantra

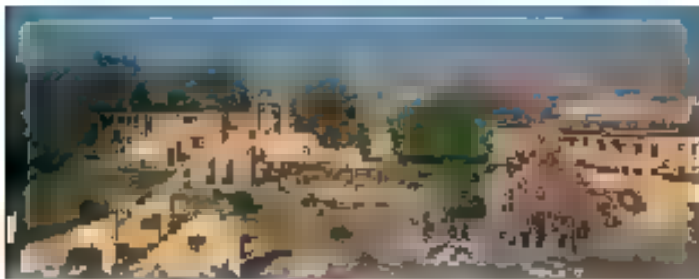
A brass tube passes through the centre of these two circular metal instruments. They can be used to calculate the angles of stars and planets from the equator



★ **Ram Yantra**

Vertical columns support an equal number of horizontal slabs in the two identical stone structures that comprise this instrument. Its readings determine the celestial arc from horizon to zenith, as well as the altitude of the sun






A view of Jantar Mantar

The complex of stone and metal instruments was repaired with the addition of marble inlay commissioned by Madho Singh II in 1901

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Chandni Chowk outside City Palace **Tel** (0141) 261 0494

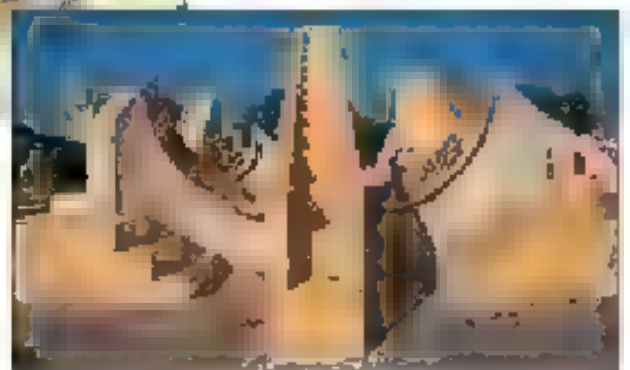
☐ daily ☒ public hols.
☒ free on Mon. ☒ extra charges  



★ Samrat Yantra

Jai Singh believed that gigantic instruments would give more accurate results. This 23 m (75 ft) high sundial forecasts the crop prospects for the year

Hawa Mahal



Rashivalaya Yantra

This is composed of 12 pieces, each of which represents a sign of the zodiac and therefore faces a different constellation. This yantra (instrument), used by astrologers to draw up horoscopes, is the only one of its kind



★ Jai Prakash Yantra

These two sunken hemispheres map out the heavens. Some historians believe that Jai Singh invented this instrument himself to verify the accuracy of all the other instruments in the observatory

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Ram Yantra
- ★ Samrat Yantra
- ★ Jai Prakash Yantra

Jaipur: South of the Walled City

By the end of the 19th century, Jaipur had expanded far beyond the boundaries of the walled city established by Sawai Jai Singh II. Many new pleasure palaces, hunting lodges and mansions came up on its outskirts, making the city a harmonious blend of old and new.



Lakshmi Narayan Temple, a white marble addition to the Pink City

■ Moti Doongri Palace

Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg.

● to the public

Moti Doongri palace, perched on a low hilltop, owes its florid exterior to Sawai Man Singh II, who converted the old fort of Shankargarh into a palace and added turrets in the style of a Scottish castle. In 1940 he married the beautiful Princess Gayatri Devi of Cocho Benar, and this palace with its modernized interior became the venue for glittering parties hosted by the glamorous couple.

At the foot of Moti Doongri is the white marble **Lakshmi Narayan Temple**, a popular place of worship, admired for its elaborate carvings.

■ Rambagh Palace

Bhawani Singh Rd. Tel (0141) 221

1919 ■ open to non-residents

The Rambagh Palace, now a splendid hotel (see p 703), has a colourful past. Built in 1835 it was originally a small garden pavilion for Ram Singh II's wet nurse, but was used as a hunting lodge after she died in 1856. Later, on his return from England, Ram Singh II's son Madho Singh II transformed it into a royal playground with squash and tennis courts, a polo field and an indoor swimming pool. In 1933, it became the official residence of Madho Singh's adopted heir Man Singh II,

who hired Hammonds of London to redo the interiors. New additions included an

exotic red and gold Chinese room, black marble bathrooms, Lalique crystal chandeliers and an illuminated dining table. Surrounded by fairy-tale gardens,

it became a hotel in 1957, when Man Singh II moved to the smaller Raj Mahal Palace.

■ Raj Mahal Palace

Sardar Patel Marg. Tel (0141) 510

5665 ■ open to non-residents

Now a grand heritage hotel, this pleasant 18th-century

palace, less opulent than the Rambagh Palace, occupies a special place in the history of Jaipur. Built in 1739 for Sawai Jai Singh II's favourite queen, Chandra Kumari Ranawat, it was used as a summer resort by the ladies of the court. In 1821 it was declared the official home of the British Resident in Jaipur. However the most memorable phase of its history dates to the time when Man Singh II and Gayatri Devi moved here from Rambagh Palace in 1956. Among the celebrities they entertained were Prince Philip, the polo player like Man Singh II and Jackie Kennedy.

■ Jawahar Kala Kendra

Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg. Tel (0141)

270 5879 ■ daily ■ ■ ■

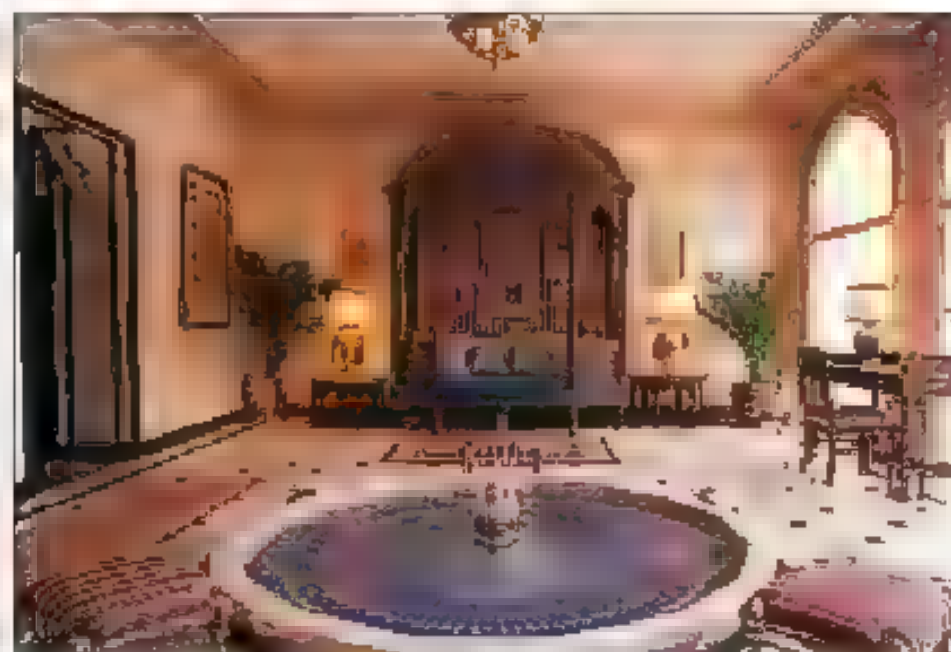
Designed by the Indian architect Charles Correa in 1993, this remarkable building

pays vivid tribute to contemporary Indian design. Imaginatively patterned after the famous grid system of the city, each of its nine squares or courts houses a small *mahal*, or

palace, named after a planet. Each one displays selected exhibits of textiles, handicrafts and weaponry, while in the centre there is a wonderfully conceived open-air plaza where performances of traditional Rajasthani music and dance are held.



Jawahar Kala Kendra



The luxurious interior of Rambagh Palace, now a hotel

Jaipur Jewellery

Be it the fabulous rubies and emeralds sported by former maharajas and their queens or the splendid silver and bone ornaments worn by peasants, jewellery is an integral part of Rajasthani culture. Even camels, horses and elephants have specially designed anklets and necklaces. Jaipur is one of the largest ornament-making centres in India, and *meenakari* (enamel work) and *kundankari* (inlay work with gems) are the two traditional

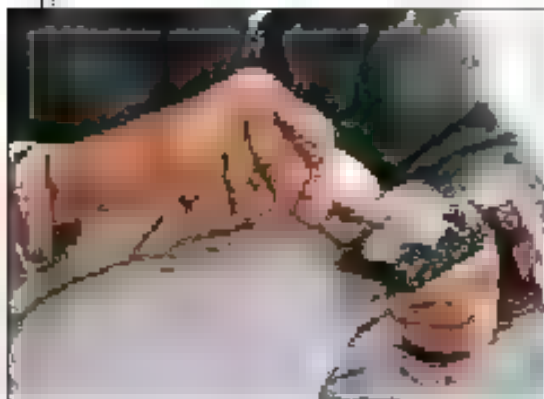
techniques for which it is most famous. In the 16th century, Man Singh I (see p364), influenced by the prevailing fashions of the Mughal court, brought five Sikh enamel workers from Lahore to his state. Since then, generations of highly skilled jewellers have lived and worked here. Jaipur caters to every taste from chunky silver ornaments to more sophisticated designs intricately set in gold with precious stones.



A kundankari pendant



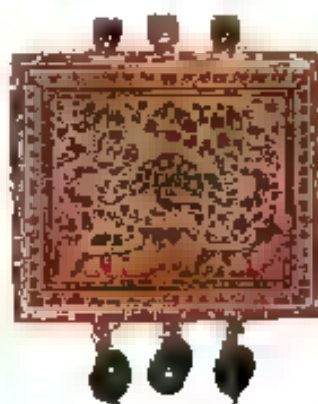
A jewelled trinket box with a kundankari lid. The lower portion of this box is worked in fine meenakari and has traditional floral patterns in red, blue, green and white.



The skill of stone-setting can be seen in the crowded alleys of *Haldiyon ka Rasta*, *Jadhiyon ka Rasta* and *Gopalji ka Rasta*. An inherited art, the jewellery trade is in the hands of artisans' guilds.



Sarpech, the cypress-shaped turban ornament, was a fashion statement introduced by the Mughal emperors in the early 17th century to display their finest gems. Rajput rulers, impressed by Mughal flamboyance, sported similar dazzling ornaments such as this piece of enameled gold set with emeralds, rubies, diamonds and sapphires, finished with a pearl drop.



Meenakari embellishes the obverse side of kundan jewellery, for the Rajasthani love of adornment decrees that even the back of a piece of jewellery (left) must be as beautiful as the front (right).



Kundankari uses highly refined gold as a base, which is then inlaid with lac and set with precious and semi-precious stones to provide colour and design. Purified gold wire outlines the design, and also conceals the lac background.



Jaipur is now a centre of lapidary, specializing in cutting emeralds and diamonds from Africa, South America and various regions of India. Gem cutters learn their skill by cutting garnets.

Exploring Jaipur: Outer Sites

A parallel range of hills runs along Jaipur's eastern periphery, from Sanganer in the south up to Amber and beyond, enclosing a narrow valley. Consisting of thickly wooded slopes and rocky terrain, this was the area where the nobility built temples, gardens, pavilions and palaces. Perched high above the city are the dramatic fortresses of Nahargarh and Jaigarh that guarded the approach to both Amber and the new capital of Jaipur. The surrounding region also has the remains of fortified walls, temples, *havelis* and the marble cenotaphs of the Kachhawaha kings of Amber and Jaipur.



SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- Gaitor ⑥
- Gaita ②
- Jaigarh ⑧
- Jal Mahal ⑦
- Nahargarh ⑤
- Ramgarh ④
- Sanganer ①
- Sisodia Rani ka Bagh ③

KEY

- Jaipur city centre
- National highway
- Major road

0 kms 25
0 miles 25



Marble statue of a Jain *tirthankara* at Sanganer's Sanghiji Temple

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp702-5 and pp731-2

Sanganer

Jaipur district, 15 km (9 miles)
SW of Jaipur

This colourful town is famous for its blockprinted cotton. Today most of its printers and dyers belong to a guild, with retail outlets selling reasonably priced fabrics. Sanganer owes its success as a printing centre to a rivulet whose waters have a mineral content that fixes dyes. Sanganer is also a centre of handmade paper and of Jaipur's renowned, hand-painted Blue Pottery of which vases and tiles with delicate Persian, Turkish and Indian designs are made. Tucked away in the old walled town is the impressive 11th-century Jain **Sanghiji Temple**, lavishly decorated with carvings. Sanganer is now a busy suburb of Jaipur city and houses the city's airport.



A sacred tank in Gaita

Gaita

Jaipur district, 10 km (6 miles) E of Jaipur

This picturesque gorge cradles Gaita Kund, an 18th-century religious site with two main temples and a number of smaller shrines. Its seven sacred tanks, fed by natural spring water, are said to have curative powers. Two pavilions on either side of the complex have well-preserved frescoes. The Surya Temple, high on the ridge, provides spectacular views of Jaipur.

Sisodia Rani ka Bagh

Jaipur district, Purana Ghat, 6 km (4 miles) E of Jaipur **Tel** (0141) 264 0594 ☐ daily

This terraced garden was laid out in the 18th century for Sawai Jai Singh II's second



The picturesque Jal Mahal, seemingly afloat during the monsoon






wife, who married him on the condition that her son would succeed to the throne. To escape the inevitable palace intrigues, the queen moved to a more private home outside the walled city. Her little double-storeyed palace, decorated with lively murals, is surrounded by beautiful gardens. It is today a popular location for Indian films.

Ramgarh

Jaipur district, 40 km (25 miles) E of Jaipur

Ramgarh is the site of one of the earliest Kachhawaha fortresses. The fort was built by the dynasty's founder, Dulch Rai (c 1093–1135), who also built a temple dedicated to the goddess Jamvai Mata, now visited by thousands of devotees. Ramgarh Lodge, on the northern bank of a man-made lake, is an elegant French villa-style hunting lodge built in 1931 for the Jaipur royal family. It is now a pleasant heritage hotel with one of the best polo grounds in the country.

Nahargarh

Jaipur district, 9 km (6 miles) NW of Jaipur. **Tel** (0141) 253 0293  daily  public hols.   

The forbidding hill-top fort of Nahargarh ("Tiger Fort") stands in what was once a densely forested area. The fierce Meena tribe ruled this region until they were defeated by the Kachhawahas. Its fortifications, strengthened by Sawai Jai Singh II, were subsequently expanded by successive rulers. Macho Singh II added a lavish palace called Madhavendra Bhavan for his nine queens. Laid out in a maze of terraces and

courtyards, it has a cool, airy upper chamber from which the ladies of the court could view the city. Its walls and pillars are an outstanding example of *aravtib*, a form of plaster work that is hand-polished with a piece of agate to produce a marble finish.

Gaitor


Jaipur district, 8 km (5 miles) N of Jaipur.  daily  public hols.

The marble cenotaphs of the Kachhawaha kings are enclosed in a walled garden just off the Amber road. This area was chosen by Sawai Jai Singh II as the new cremation site after Amber (see pp364–5) was abandoned.

Ornate carved pillars support the marble *chhatris* erected over the platforms where the maharajas were cremated. One of the most impressive cenotaphs in the complex is that of Jai Singh II himself. It has 20 marble pillars carved with religious and mythological scenes and is topped by a white marble


dome. The most recent cenotaph was erected in 1997 in memory of Jagat Singh, the only son of Sawai Man Singh II and Gayatri Devi.

Jal Mahal

Jaipur district, 8 km (5 miles) N of Jaipur.  daily

During the monsoon, water fills the Man Sagar lake, and the Jal Mahal ("Water Palace") seems to rise from it like a mirage. Built in the mid-18th century by Macho Singh I, it is inspired by the Lake Palace at Udaipur, where the king spent his childhood. It was later used for royal duck-shooting parties and a variety of water birds are still seen here. The terraced garden, enclosed by arched passages, has elegant semi-octagonal towers capped by cupolas in each corner.

Jaigarh

Jaipur district, 12 km (8 miles) NW of Jaipur. **Tel** (0141) 267 1848 

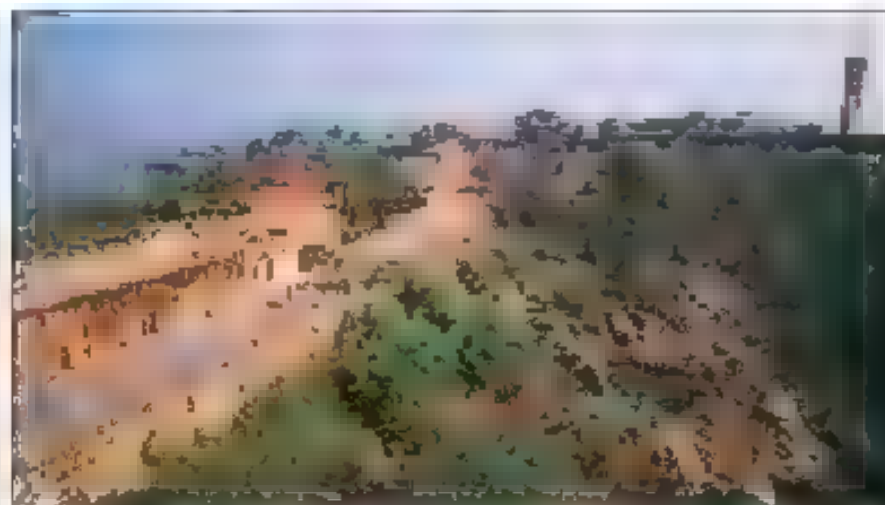
9am–4.30pm  public hols.  

Legendary Jaigarh, the "Victory Fort", watches over the old capital of Amber. One of the few surviving cannon foundries is located here. Its most prized possession is the monumental 50-tonne Jai Van, cast in 1726 and said to be the world's largest cannon on wheels. Ironically, despite its impressive size, the cannon has never been fired.

Other interesting sights are the Diva Burj, a seven-storeyed tower where a huge oil lamp was lit on the king's birthday, two temples and a palace built over 200 years ago.



The famous Jai Van



The ramparts of Jaigarh Fort, a feat of military engineering

Amber Fort ②



Detail of door at
Shila Devi

The fort palace of Amber was the Kachhawaha citadel until 1727, when their capital moved to Jaipur. Successive rulers continued to come here on important occasions to seek the blessings of the family deity, Shila Devi. The citadel was established in 1592 by Man Singh I on the remains of an old 11th-century fort, but the various buildings added by Jai Singh I (r 1621–57) are what constitute its magnificent centrepiece.



Elephant ride on the cobbled
pathway to the fort



★ Sheesh Mahal

The flame of a single candle reflected in the tiny mirrors embedded in this chamber, transforms it into a starlit sky.

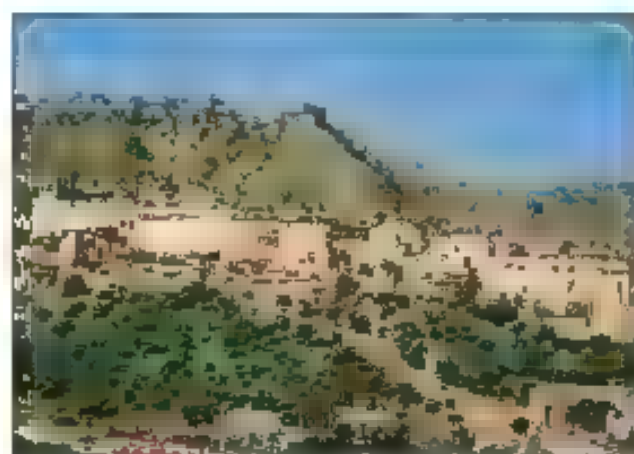


Jas Mandir

This Hall of Private Audience has latticed windows, a floral ceiling of elegant alabaster relief work and glass inlay. A marble screen here overlooks the Maota Lake and allows in cool air.

A view of Amber Fort

Protected by Jalgarh Fort, the massive ramparts of Amber Fort follow the contours of a natural ridge.



Aram Bagh, the
pleasure garden

Jai Mandir

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Sheesh Mahal
- ★ Ganesh Pol
- ★ Shila Devi Temple



★ Ganesh Pol

This shimmering three-storeyed gateway built in 1640, is connected to the private apartments by the screened uppermost level, meant for ladies in purdah.

Sukh Niwas

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Jaipur district 11 km (7 miles)
N of Jaipur Tel (0)41, 253 0293
☐ 8am–5.30pm daily ☑ public
hols. ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑



★ Shila Devi Temple

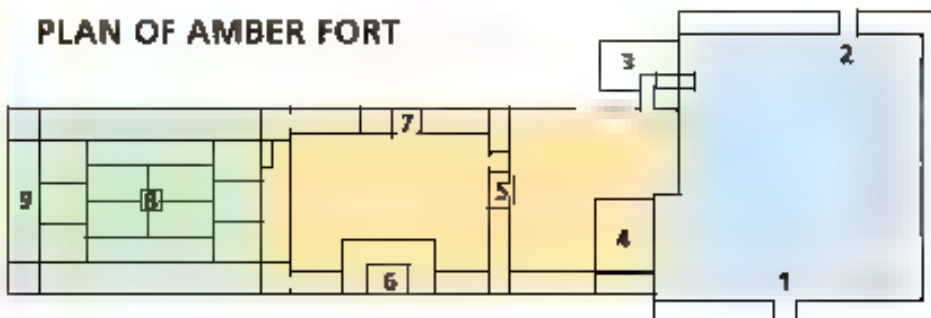
This ornately carved silver door is the entrance to the Shila Devi Temple

Shila
Devi
Temple

Diwan-i-Aam

Satta's
Katcheri

PLAN OF AMBER FORT



KEY

- ☐ Area illustrated
- ☐ Man Singh's Palace
- ☐ Jaleb Chowk

0 metres 100
0 yards 100

- 1 Sura, Pol
- 2 Chand Pol
- 3 Shila Devi Temple
- 4 Diwan-i-Aam
- 5 Ganesh Pol
- 6 Jai Mandir
- 6 Jas Mandir

- 6 Sheesh Mahal
- 7 Satta Niwas
- 8 Baradari
- 9 Zenana



Exploring Amber (the Old Capital)



Detail of painting on Ganesh Pol

Crowning the crest of a hill, Amber Fort offers a panoramic view of Maota Lake and the historic old town at the base of the hill, which was the early seat of the Amber kings before they made the fort their capital. Several havelis, stepwells and temples can be seen below the fort,

pointing to the existence of a self-sufficient township, where the Mughal emperor Akbar used to stop on his annual pilgrimage to Ajmer (see p376).



Sattais Katcheri, where the revenue records were written

The Fort Complex

The main entrance to the historic Amber Fort is through the imposing **Suraj Pol** ("Sun Gate"), so called because it faces the direction of the rising sun, the Kachhawaha family emblem. The gate leads into a huge courtyard, **Jaleb Chowk**, lined on three sides with souvenir and refreshment shops. A flight of steps leads to the **Shila Devi Temple**, which has silver doors, silver oil lamps, grand pillars carved to look like banana trees, and contains the Kachhawaha family deity, a stone (*shila*) image of the goddess Kali. The next courtyard is the

Diwan-i-Aam, the space for public audience. Near it is the **Sattais Katcheri**, a colonnade of 27 (*sattais*) pillars where scribes once sat to record revenue petitions.

The magnificent **Ganesh Pol** is the gateway to three pleasure places, each with special features. Joint around a Mughal-style garden, **Aram Bagh**. Maota Lake, which provided water to the fort, is surrounded by two exquisite gardens. The **Kesar Kyari Bagh** has star-shaped flower beds once planted with

saffron (*kesar*) flowers, while **Dilaram Bagh**, built in 1568 as a resting place for Akbar on his way to Ajmer, is a clever pun on the name of its architect, Dilaram ("Heart's Ease"). A small Archaeological Museum is located nearby. The farthest and oldest end of the fort was converted into the *zenana* (women's quarters), with screens and covered balconies for the seclusion of the royal ladies in *pardah*. Faint traces of frescoes are still visible on the walls. In the centre of the courtyard is a pavilion with 12 pillars, the **Baradari**.

The Township

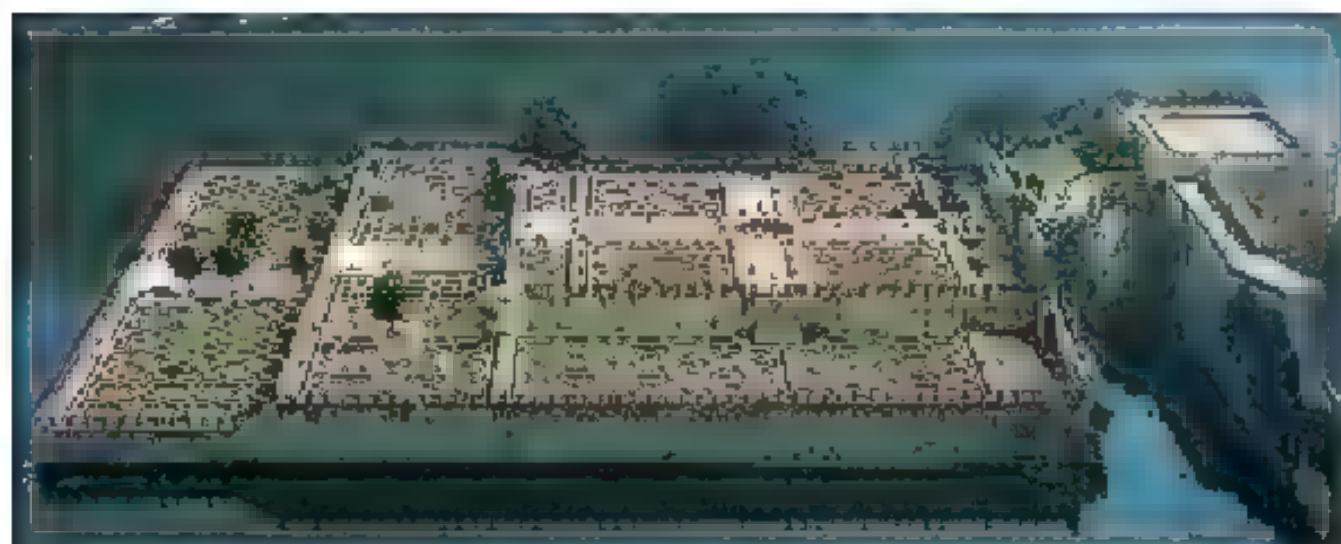
The **Chand Pol** ("Moon Gate"), directly opposite Suraj Pol, leads to the old town outside the fort. The beautiful **Jagat Shiromani Temple** with its remarkable *torana* (gateway) is one of the many temples that lies along this route. It also has a water tank, **Panna Mian ka Kund**. To the east lies **Sagar**, a popular picnic spot with two terraced lakes. The Jaipur-Delhi

Highway cuts across the town, and Amber's main market and bus stand are located on this road. Further north stands the **Akbari Mosque**, built by Emperor Akbar in 1569, and towards the east is

Bharmal ki Chhatra, a walled enclosure containing a group of memorials. This was the old cremation site for the rulers of Amber until a new spot was chosen at Gaitori (see p363), near Jaipur.



Marble carving of a Hindu deity



Kesar Kyari Bagh, named after the rare saffron flowers once planted in its star-shaped flower beds

Bharatpur ①

Bharatpur district 181 km (112 miles)

E of Jaipur 204,500

RTDC Hotel Saras, (05644) 22

2542 Jaiswant Mela (Oct)

Most famous for its bird sanctuary, the kingdom of Bharatpur was founded by the fearless Jats, a community of landowners. Their



The moat and ramparts of Lohagarh

most remarkable leader Raja Suraj Mal (r 1724–63), fortified the city of Bharatpur in 1733 and used the fort from Mughal buildings to embellish the forts and palaces of his kingdom.

In the centre of the town is **Lohagarh** "Iron Fort," a masterpiece of construction. Its massive double ramparts of packed mud and rubble surrounded by impressive moats withstood repeated attacks by the Marathas and the British until it was finally captured by Lord Lake in 1805. Three palaces built in the fort display a fine mix of Mughal and Rajput stylistic detail. One is now the site of a pharmaceutical

college, while the other two, around the Katcheri Bagh house the **State Museum**. Its artifacts include a rare collection of 1st- and 2nd-century stone carvings. An interesting sunken *bamam* (bath) is close by. In 1828 Bharatpur became the region's first princely state to sign a treaty with the East India Company.

State Museum

Tel (05644) 22 8185 Fr–Wed

public hrs free on Mon

extra charges

Keoladeo Ghana National Park ④

See pp368–9

Deeg ⑤

Bharatpur district 36 km (22 miles)

N of Bharatpur RTDC Hotel

Saras, Bharatpur (05644) 22 3700

Holi (Mar), Jawahar Mela (Aug)

Water Palace daily the day after Holi (Mar)

Once the capital of the Jat kings of Bharatpur, Deeg rose to prominence after the decline of the Mughal empire in the 18th century. Its square fort and fortified town, once filled with grand mansions and gardens, now are unkempt

and forlorn. Deeg's Raja Suraj Mal and his son, Jawahar Singh, were keen builders of lavish pleasure palaces and the most remarkable of these is the **Deeg Water Palace**, a romantic summer retreat for the Jat kings. The magic of the monsoon inspired a lyrical composition of sandstone and marble pavilions replete with gardens and pools. A skilful cooling system drew water from a huge reservoir and used a number of innovative spatial effects to simulate monsoon showers and even



Sawan Pavilion, Deeg Water Palace

produce rainbows. The coloured fountains are now used only during the Jawahar Mela

DEEG WATER PALACE

Sawan Pavilion is shaped like an upturned boat. Its ingenious water system created a semi-circle of falling water.

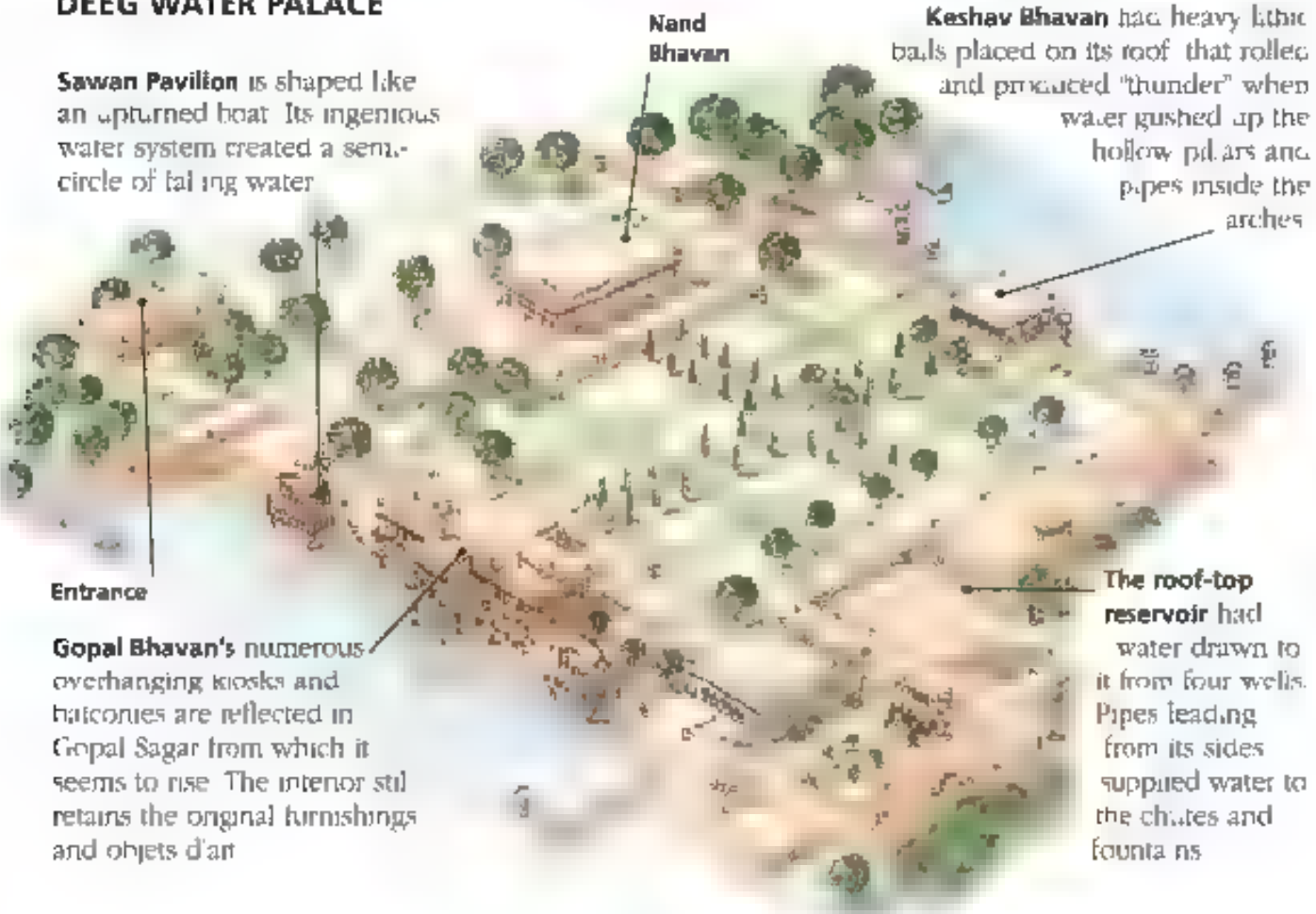
Nand Bhavan

Keshav Bhavan has heavy lithic balls placed on its roof that rolled and produced "thunder" when water gushed up the hollow pillars and pipes inside the arches.

Entrance

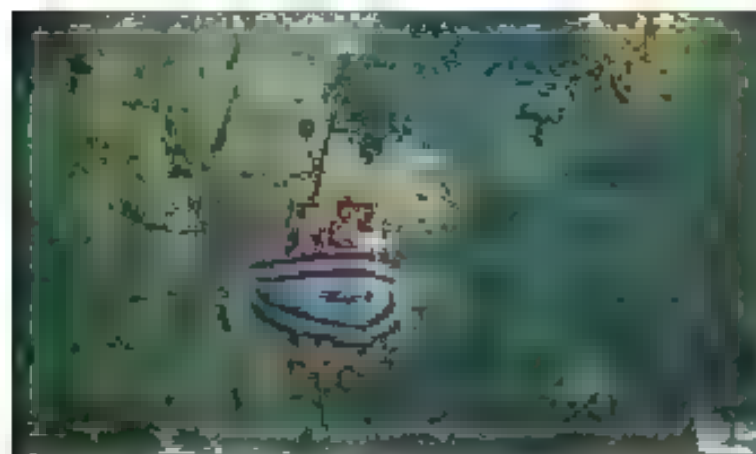
Gopal Bhavan's numerous overhanging kiosks and balconies are reflected in Gopal Sagar from which it seems to rise. The interior still retains the original furnishings and objets d'art.

The roof-top reservoir had water drawn to it from four wells. Pipes leading from its sides supplied water to the chutes and fountains.



Keoladeo Ghana National Park 4

A UNESCO World Heritage Site regarded as one of the world's most important bird sanctuaries, Keoladeo Ghana derives its name from a Shiva temple (Keoladeo) within a dense forest (*ghana*). This once-arid scrubland was first developed by Bharatpur's rulers in the mid-18th century by diverting the waters of a nearby irrigation canal to create a private duck reserve. Extravagant shooting parties for British viceroys and other royal guests were held here, and horrifying numbers of birds were shot in a single day. Today, the park spreads over 29 sq km (11 sq miles) of wetlands, and attracts a wide variety of migrant and water birds who fly in each winter from places as distant as Siberia. Keoladeo's dry area has mixed deciduous and scrub vegetation and is home to many animals, including the famed nilgai.



Getting Around the Park

Expert boatmen navigate the wetlands and point out bird colonies. Bicycles and cycle-rickshaws are also available for touring the forest paths.

Dry scrubland provides good grazing for nilgai and other species of deer.

BIRDS, RESIDENT AND MIGRANT



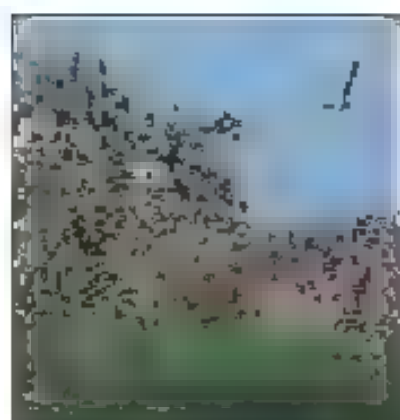
The male Sarus crane dances to attract his mate.

the world's tallest stork. Standing on coral-coloured legs, the bird is 2 m (7 ft) tall, with a wingspan of 2.5 m (8 ft). The Sarus crane, a symbol of fidelity in Indian mythology, woos its partner for life with an elaborate mating dance.

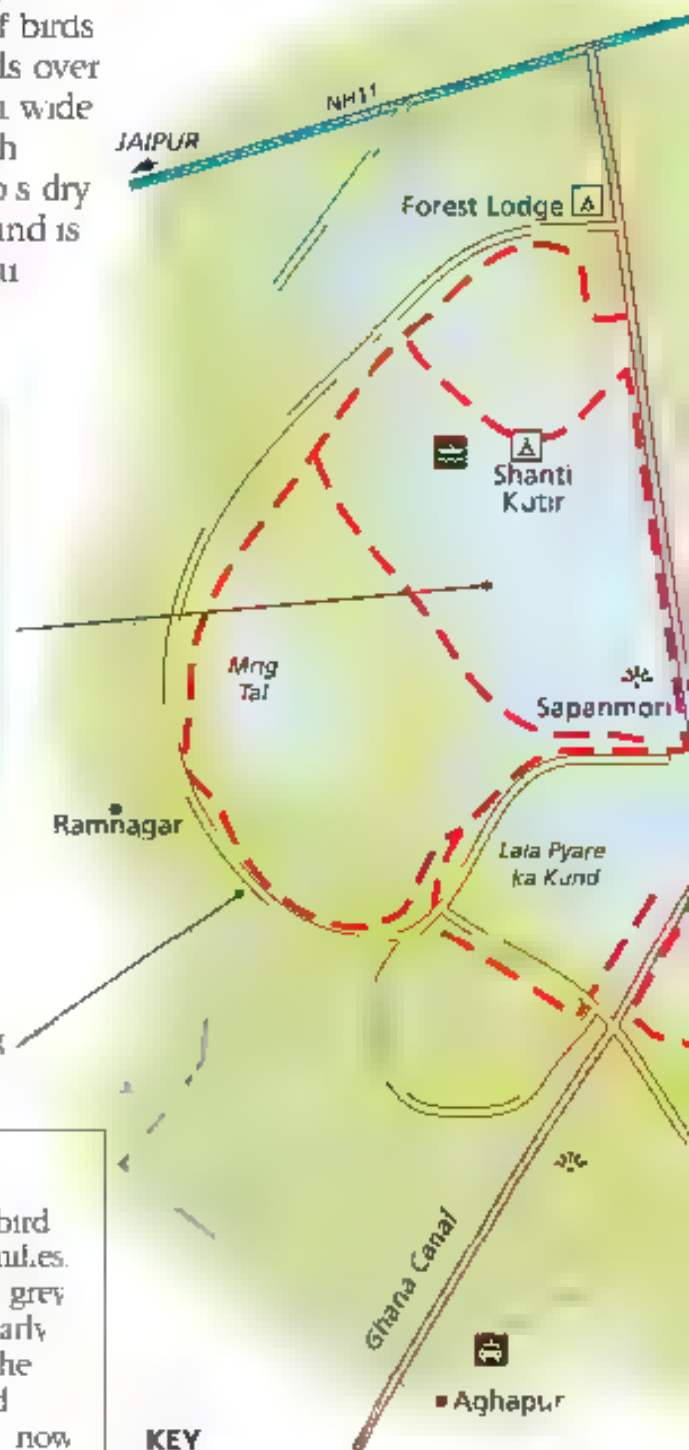
The park attracts over 375 bird species belonging to 56 families. Egrets, darters, cormorants, grey herons and storks hatch nearly 30,000 chicks every year. The park's most eagerly awaited visitor is the Siberian crane, now an endangered species. Other birds include the peregrine falcon, steppe eagle, garganey, teal, snake bird and white ibis. Among the large variety of storks are the open-bill stork, the painted stork and the black-necked stork, considered to be



Baby cormorants



Shallow wetlands, one of the world's finest heronries.



KEY

- Main road
- Minor road
- Park boundary
- - Foot path/cycle trail
- ☐ Marshland
- 🌳 Viewpoint
- 🚢 Jetty
- 🚤 Boating
- 🚓 Police station
- 🏠 Temple
- 🏠 Accommodation



Painted Storks

Between July and October the trees become nesting sites for nearly 5 000 pairs of these birds, named after their colourful beaks and their plumage which is "painted" with black bands

A stone plaque near the temple records figures of past bird shoots.

Nilgai (Blue Bull)

The largest of all Asiatic antelopes, these avid crop grazers are protected against hunting because of their resemblance to the holy cow. Their broad backs offer comfortable resting places for birds



Indian Soft-Shell Turtle

The park's wetlands provide an ideal habitat for this endangered species



White-Throated Kingfisher

One of the most commonly sighted birds in the park, the vividly-coloured kingfisher is usually found near the ponds, lakes and marshlands, perched on branches of trees, waiting for its prey



Nesting

With the arrival of the monsoon thousands of birds, such as these greater cormorants, set up nesting colonies. As many as 60 noisy nests on one tree may be seen during this season



0 kilometres 1
0 miles 1

Alwar 6

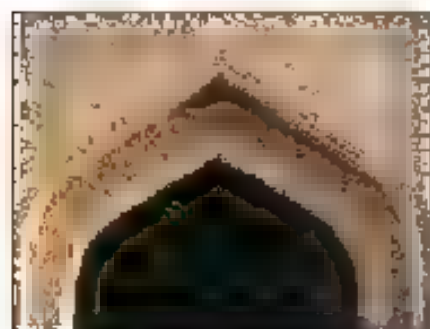
Alwar district 150 km (93 miles)

NE of Jaipur 260,300

I RTDC, Nehru Marg, opp railway station, (0144) 234 7348

R Jagannathi, Fair (Mar/Apr)

The former princely state of Alwar is now a dusty provincial town, visited by few tourists except those on their way to the Sariska National Park. Nevertheless it has some remarkable monuments, built by its wealthy rulers in the 18th century, that are worth seeing. The most significant of these is the **City Palace**, whose architectural features include a profusion of curved *bangaldar* roofs and *chhatris* (pavilions) as



Gate of the Tomb of Fateh Jang

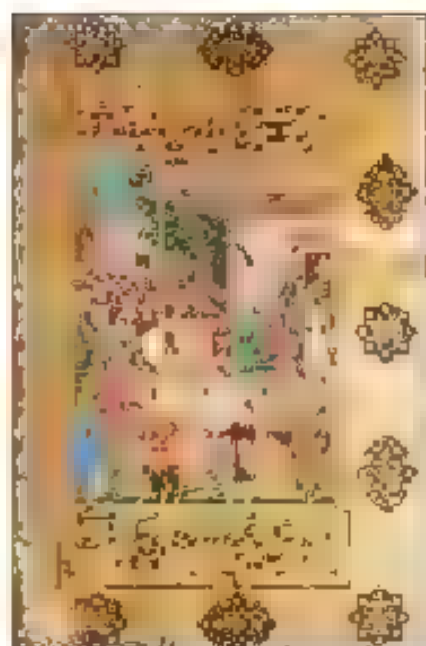
well as delicate Mughal floral tracery and *jalis*. The palace, built in 1793, now houses the District Collectorate and Police Headquarters, and is best viewed from the central courtyard with its lovely marble pavilions. The lavishly decorated Durbar Hall and the Sheesh Mahal, on the first floor, can only be viewed with special permission.

A door to the right of the courtyard leads to the **City Palace Museum**, spread over three halls on the palace's upper storey. Its treasures,

which bear witness to the opulent lifestyles of Alwar's maharajas, include rare and exquisite copies of the Persian poet Saadi's *Gulistan* (written in 1258) and the *Babur Nama* or "Memoirs of Babur" (1530), superb Mughal and Rajput miniatures and an awesome armoury. Particularly intriguing is a macabre coil called *nagphas* used for strangling enemies. Another unique exhibit is a silver dining table with dividers, through which shoals of metal fish can be seen swimming.

The cenotaph of Maharaja Bakhtawar Singh (r 1790–1815) lies behind the palace, across a magnificent *kund* (tank). It is locally known as **Moosi Maharani ki Chhatri** after his mistress who committed *sati* here after he died. An elegant monument that blends brown sandstone with white marble, its ceilings are adorned with gold leaf paintings.

On a steep hill above the city is the rugged **Bala Qila**, a fort with extensive ramparts, massive gateways and some spectacular views from the top. Originally a 10th-century Hindu fort, it was added to by the Mughals and later, and captured by Pratap Singh of Alwar in 1775. Within the fort is a pretty frescoed palace, the Nikumbh Mahal, in the courtyard of which a police wireless station is, rather inappropriately sited. Also visible are the ruins of the



A page from the *Gulistan*

Sam Mahal, named after Jahangir (Salim) Mughal emperor Akbar's heir who was exiled here after he plotted to kill Abu'l Fazl, the emperor's official historian. Near Alwar's railway station is another fine monument, the **Tomb of Fateh Jang**, one of Emperor Shah Jahan's ministers, built in 1647. Dominated by an enormous dome, the walls and ceiling of this magnificent five-storeyed structure have raised plaster reliefs.

Alwar's green lung **Company Bagh**, is a lovely garden with a greenhouse.

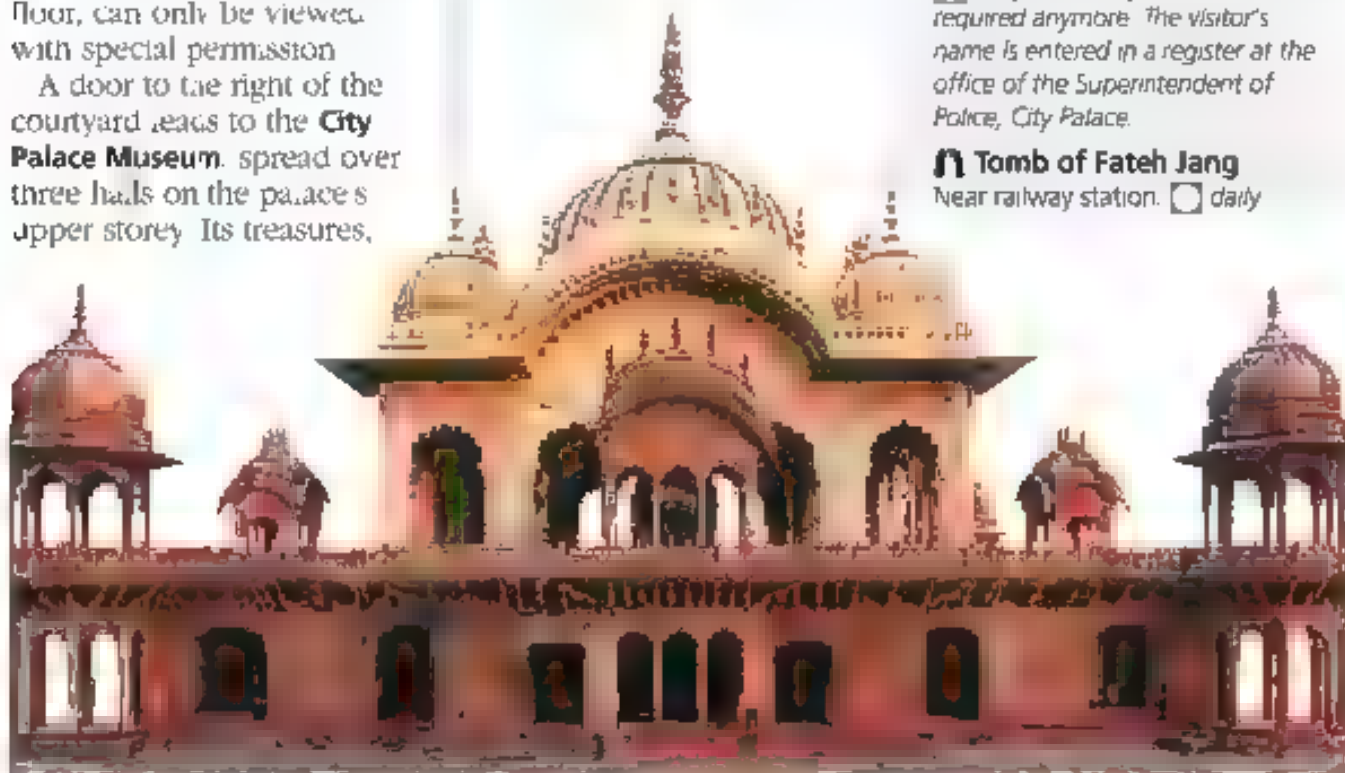
City Palace
Near Collectorate. ☐ daily. **RS**

City Palace Museum
☐ Sat–Thu. ☒ public hols. **RS**

Moosi Maharani ki Chhatri
☐ Sat–Thu. ☒ public hols. **RS**

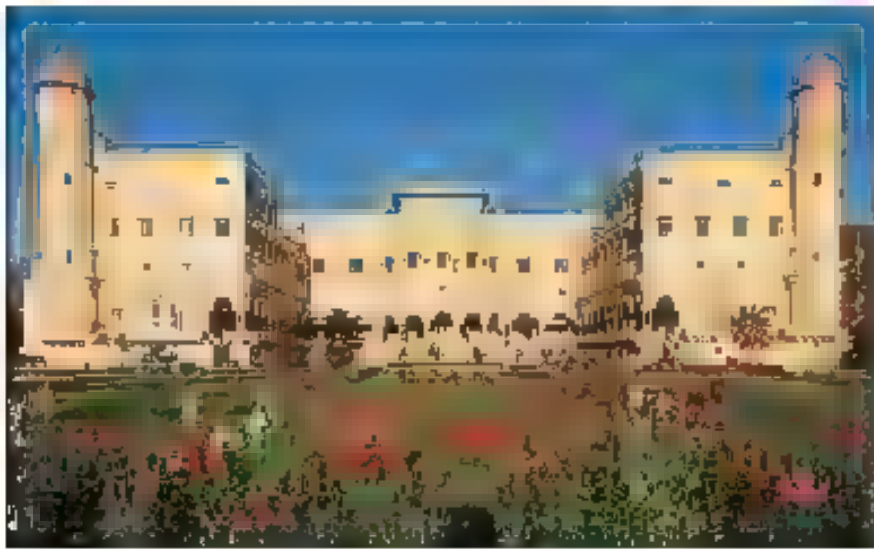
Bala Qila
☐ daily. Written permission not required anymore. The visitor's name is entered in a register at the office of the Superintendent of Police, City Palace.

Tomb of Fateh Jang
Near railway station. ☐ daily



The elegant marble pavilion at Moosi Maharani ki Chhatri

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp702–5 and pp731–2



Sariska Palace, a luxury hotel just outside the Tiger Reserve

Sariska National Park

Alwar district 37 km (23 miles) NE of Alwar Field Director, Project Tiger Sanctuary, Sariska (0144) 284 1333 Sep-Jun extra for personal vehicles or jeeps

Designated a Tiger Reserve under Project Tiger (see p289) in 1979 Sariska National Park, formerly the private hunting ground of the princely state of Alwar sprawls over 800 sq km (309 sq miles), with a core area of 480 sq km (185 sq miles). The Aravalli Range branches out at Sariska forming low plateaux and valleys that harbour a wide spectrum of wildlife.

The tiger population at Sariska is now believed to be between 20 and 30. However, spotting one is a rarity. It was reported by the media that not a single tiger survived in the reserve. Nevertheless, forest guides keep track of where a tiger was last seen and can sometimes lead visitors to spot this elusive predator.

There are a series of watering holes in Sariska, at Pandupol, Bandipol, Slopka, Kalghat, and Talvrikra, that make good vantage points to view wildlife, especially at sunset when herds of animals flock to them to quench their thirst. The gentle chital or spotted deer is commonly sighted at the park's watering holes, while the *chausingha* (four-horned antelope), unique to Sariska, can be spotted around Pandupol. Other

species that can be seen here are panthers and black-faced langur monkeys, jackals and hyenas, nilgai or blue bulls, wild boars and porcupines.

Among the birds that can be spotted are the crested serpent eagle, the great Indian horned owl, woodpeckers, kingfishers and partridges.

The dry deciduous forests of Sariska come to life during the brief spring and early summer when the flowering *dhak* (*Butea monosperma*) and laburnum bloom. The date palm begins to bear fruit, while berries known locally as *kair* (*Capparis decidua*) appear on the bushes.



Silk cotton in bloom

The Kankwari Fort, dating to the 17th century, and temple ruins, such as those of the Pandupol

Temple, are within the park. The Sariska Palace, built at the end of the 19th century as a hunting lodge for Alwar's rulers, is now a luxury hotel (see p205), with a collection of vintage *shikar* photographs.



Black-faced Hanuman langurs, a common sight at Sariska

FESTIVALS OF RAJASTHAN

Nagaur Cattle Fair (Jan/Feb), Nagaur Camel races, puppet shows, folk music and dance mark this week-long fair (see p376).

Gangaur (Mar/Apr) This 18-day festival celebrates the marital bliss of Shiva and Parvati and is a major event all over Rajasthan, though celebrated with special verve in Udaipur. Women perform the swirling *ghoomar* dance, and carry images of the goddess in colourful processions through the streets, as they pray for their husbands' wellbeing.



Gangaur celebrations, Udaipur

Elephant Festival (Mar) Jaipur Processions of splendidly caparisoned elephants and an elephant polo tournament are the highlights of this festival.

Mewar Festival (Mar) Udaipur Mewar's heritage is celebrated with cultural shows and fireworks.



Teej (Aug/Sep) Girls all over Rajasthan wear new clothes, sing and dance joyously to celebrate this festival, venerating Parvati, goddess of marital harmony. Teej also heralds the arrival of the monsoon.

Urs (Oct) Ajmer The mesmerising music of qawwal singers is a highlight of the 13-day long death anniversary ceremonies for the Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

Pushkar Fair (Oct/Nov), Pushkar (see pp374-5)

Shekhawati ⑤

Sikar & Jhunjhunu districts, 115 km (72 miles) NW from Jaipur to Sikar

  Ganqaur Festival (Mar/Apr), Dussehra (Sept/Oct)

This region, named after its 5th-century ruler Rao Shekha, has a number of fascinating small towns with well-preserved painted *havelis*, forts and temples. Among the most interesting are **Lachhmangarh** and **Fatehpur** with their grand *havelis*, and **Dundlod**, with its well-restored fort. Especially worth visiting is **Ramgarh**, 20 km (12 miles) north of Fatehpur. Famous for its Shani Temple which has an ornate interior of mirrorwork and gilt, the town also has the Ram Gopal Poddar Chhatra, covered with more than 100 paintings. The main bazaar is crowded with "antique" dealers who sell carved doors and windows from derelict *havelis*. Many of these are extremely skilful new copies of the originals.

Mahansar, 5 km (3 miles) northeast of Ramgarh, has the splendid Soneli Dukan Haveli abundantly worked in gold leaf. The paintings on its vaulted ceiling depicting the incarnations of Vishnu are perhaps the finest in the area



A view of the impressive Char-Chowk Haveli, Lachhmangarh

Bissau, 16 km (6 miles) north-west of Mahansar, has the 18th-century Keshargarh Fort, which provides an excellent view of the sand dunes to the



Inside Dundlod Fort

north and west. It also has ten richly painted *havelis*. During Dussehra, Ramkha performances take place every evening, with the actors wearing masks and costumes made by local *sadhus* (female ascetics, who started this tradition in the 19th century).

Churu, 12 km (8 miles) northwest of Bissau, is in the desert. Though not actually part of the Shekhawati region it is included in the painted *haveli* circuit, as many merchants had homes here too. The Sarana Double Haveli, with its imposing proportions and 311 windows, is the main attraction. The Rantna Haveli, east of the vegetable market, has interesting if bizarre frescoes, including one of Jesus smoking a cigar.

THE PAINTED HAVELIS OF SHEKHAWATI

The ancestral homes of some of India's leading industrialist families, such as the Birlas and Goenkas, can be seen in the many little towns of Shekhawati. These sprawling old *havelis* with their exuberantly frescoed walls were built between the late 18th and early 20th centuries by local Marwari merchants

who had migrated to the port-cities of Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata) to seek their fortunes. Their interaction with the British and exposure to modern urban and industrial trends influenced their lifestyles. Consequently, their homes grew increasingly grand, reflecting the new ideas they brought back with them, as well as their new-found wealth and social status.

The style and content of the Shekhawati frescoes are a telling comment on the urbanization of a traditional genre. The local artists still followed the one-dimensional realism of traditional Rajput painting (see p405), but juxtaposed among the gods, goddesses and martial heroes are images from a changing world. In their celebration of contemporary "pop" themes, the frescoes of British ladies, top-hatted gentlemen, brass bands and soldiers, trains, motor cars, aeroplanes, gramophones and telephones, symbolize the industrial society emerging in the late 19th century.



The entrance to Biyani Haveli, Sikar



Fresco of a group of turbaned Rajput chieftains

A Tour of Shekhawati 9

Situated along the old camel caravan trade route, northwest of Jaipur, the Shekhawati ("Garden of Shekha") region resembles an open-air museum. A network of excellent roads through semi arid scrubland connects numerous towns and villages, known for minor forts, *havelis* and the painted *havelis* of India's leading merchant families still standing in all their evocative splendour.



A wall in the Poddar School, Nawalgarh, depicting gods and goddesses flying kites



Fatehpur ③

This picturesque mid-15th century town is best known for the Singhamta, Goenka and Jagan *havelis*.

Mandawa ④

This fort-palace is now a charming hotel and a convenient base from which to visit neighbouring towns.

Dundlod ⑤

Its fort-palace and two splendid Goenka *havelis* are worth a visit.

KEY

— Tour route

— Road

— River

Lachhmangarh ②

An old fort towers above this 19th-century town. The Char Chowk ("Four Courtyards") Haveli, owned by the Ganerwala family, is said to be the grandest in the region.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: 111 km (69 miles)

Stopping-off points: Mandawa, Dundlod, Mukundgarh, Fatehpur and Nawalgarh have good hotels.

Getting around: Petrol pumps are at regular intervals on the main road. A number of lesser roads lead off from NH11 towards Jhunjhunu. All of them have roadside eateries which sell mineral water, hot and cold drinks and snacks.



Sikar ①

Sikar's charm lies in its colourfully painted *havelis*, bazaars and rural ambience.



0 km 20
0 miles 10

BIKANER

Mukundgarh

Nawalgarh ⑥

The Poddar and the Aath ("eight") *havelis* are renowned for their frescoes.

ALWAR

ALWAR

Street-by-Street: Pushkar 10



A turtle shrine

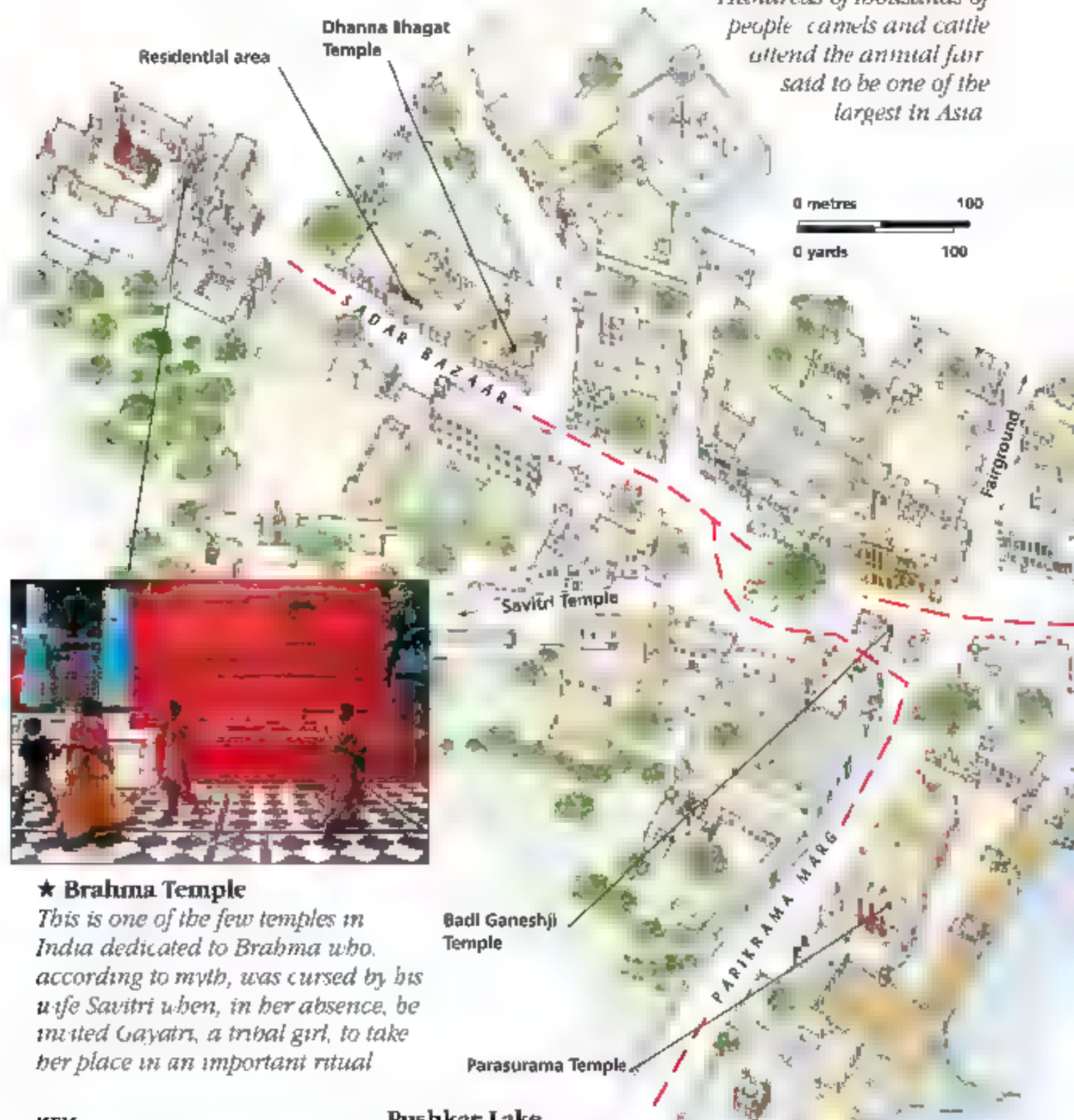
A peaceful pilgrim town of lakes and 400 temples, Pushkar derives its name from *pushpa* (flower) and *kar* (hand) after a legend that claims its lakes were created from the petals that fell from the divine hands of Brahma the Creator. Today, life revolves around its

lakeside ghats, temples and vibrant, colourful bazaars, and it is this harmonious mix of the spiritual and commercial that draws people to Pushkar



Villagers at the Fair

Hundreds of thousands of people, camels and cattle attend the annual fair said to be one of the largest in Asia



★ Brahma Temple

This is one of the few temples in India dedicated to Brahma who, according to myth, was cursed by his wife Savitri when, in her absence, he invited Gayatri, a tribal girl, to take her place in an important ritual

KEY

--- suggested route

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Brahma Temple
- ★ Ghats

Pushkar Lake

On top of a hill, by the sacred lake of Pushkar, is the temple of Savitri. Across the lake, on another hill, is the Gayatri Temple





Rangji Temple

This temple is conspicuous for its South Indian style of architecture (see p20). Its gopura (gateway), carved with over 360 images of deities, towers over the area.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Ajmer district 144 km (90 miles)

SW of Jaipur 14,800

RTDC Hotel Sarovar, (0145, 277 2040) daily

Pushkar Fair (Oct/Nov) No eggs, meat or alcohol is available or allowed in Pushkar



Women at Sadar Bazaar



Camel at the Pushkar Fair

The Pushkar Fair

In the Hindu month of Kartik (October–November), ten days after Diwali, this peaceful town and its environs come alive as the much anticipated annual cattle fair begins. Tents and campsites suddenly spring up to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims, tourists and villagers with herds of cattle, horses and camels who come here to participate in this spectacular event.

Pushkar has always been the region's central cattle market for local herdsmen and farmers who buy and sell camels and indigenous breeds of cattle. Over the years, this trade in livestock has greatly increased in volume. The Pushkar Fair is now one of Asia's largest cattle fairs, and it transforms the quiet little village into a bustling market.

In the vast, specially built amphitheatre on the outskirts of the town, numerous camel, horse and donkey races and contests take place amid lusty cheers from the spectators. A festive, carnival atmosphere prevails in Pushkar during the fair's two-week duration.

Giant Ferris wheels and open air theatres offer amusement, while food stalls do a brisk trade, as do the shops that sell a fascinating variety of goods. In the evenings, people huddle round campfires, listening to the haunting strains of Rajasthani folk bands. The fair reaches a crescendo on the night of the full moon (*purnima*), when pilgrims take a dip in the holy lake. At dusk, during the beautiful *deepdan* ceremony, hundreds of clay lamps on leaf boats are lit and set afloat in a magical tableau.



★ Ghats

Pushkar has 52 ghats. Devout Hindus make at least one pilgrimage to Pushkar and bathe at the holy ghats to wash away their sins, thereby earning themselves a place in heaven.

Ajmer ⑩

Ajmer district 135 km (84 miles)

SW of Jaipur ① 485,200 ② ③

④ Rajasthan Tourism, near Khadim Hotel, (0145) 262 7426. ⑤ Urs (Oct)

Ajmer is famous throughout the subcontinent for the holy Muslim shrine, **Dargah Sharif**, the tomb of the great Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (1143–1235). Located in the southwest corner of the city, the saint's marble-domed tomb is at the heart of the Dargah complex, which is virtually a township in itself. It includes a bazaar and two marble mosques built by the Mughal emperors Akbar and Shah Jahan in the 16th and 17th centuries. Akbar was Chishti's most famous devotee, and once walked barefoot all the way from Agra to Ajmer, a distance of 363 km (226 miles), as thanksgiving after the birth of his son Salim, the future Emperor Jahangir.

Millions of pilgrims come to Ajmer for the saint's annual Urs (death anniversary) in October when spirited Sufi musicians sing the saint's praises in front of his tomb. A special rice pudding, cooked in giant iron cauldrons in the Dargah's courtyard, is offered to devotees.

West of the Dargah Sharif is Ajmer's architectural gem, the **Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra**, or "Hut of Two-and-a-Half Days". This strange name is said to derive from the duration of a religious fair that used to be held here. Though in ruins, the early 13th-century mosque complex, built into a hillside, is most impressive. Its main glory is its exquisite seven-arched screen in front of the colonnaded hall. Each



Pilgrims at Ajmer's Dargah Sharif, India's holiest Muslim shrine

arch is different, and the numerous columns have elaborate carvings.

In the southeast corner of Ajmer is **Mayo College**, one of India's best public schools. An excellent example of Indo-Saracenic architecture, it was set up in 1875 by the viceroy, Lord Mayo, as an "Eton of the East" for Rajput princes. Its early students came accompanied by family retainers and

private tutors, and some, like the prince of Alwar, even brought along their own elephants. Behind the 19th-century **Nasiyan Temple**, in the heart of the old city, is the **Svarna Nagan Hall**, vividly decorated with coloured-glass

mosaics and large gilded wooden figures, recreating scenes from Jain mythology.

The **Rajputana Museum**, also in the old city, is located in Emperor Akbar's fort and palace. Its exhibits include impressive sculptures

dating from the 4th to the 12th centuries.

Around **Anasagar Lake**, to the northwest of the city, are elegant marble pavilions built by Emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century. They are set on the lake's banks in a pretty garden called **Dawat Bagh**. North of the city, on the summit of Beeta Hill, is the ruined 12th-century **Taragarh Fort**, which affords spectacular views of Ajmer and the surrounding countryside.

④ Nasiyan Temple

SM Soni Marg. ⑤ daily ⑥

③ Rajputana Museum

Near bus stand. ⑤ daily ⑥

Nagaur ⑪

Nagaur district 137 km (85 miles)

NE of Jodhpur ① 83,400 ②

③ Cattle Fair (Jan/Feb)

This little desert town, midway between Jodhpur and Bikaner, is dominated by **Ahichhatragarh Fort**, dating to the 12th century. In the mid-18th century, the ruler of Jodhpur received the fort as a gift from the Mughals and embellished it with a charming pleasure palace. Several of its chambers have exquisite frescoes, now being carefully restored. The palace also has lovely water channels decorated with fish-scale patterns and ornamental spouts, as well as an ingenious system of air ducts that used to supply the inner rooms with cool air.

The Nagaur Cattle Fair rivals the Pushkar Fair (see p375), and is a dazzling kaleidoscope of animals, crafts and people, including Nagaur's famous puppeteers whose dramatic shows bring alive popular Rajasthani legends and folklore.



Calligraphy, Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra

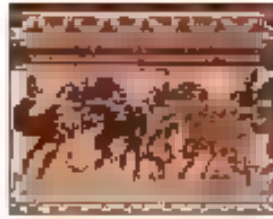


The exuberantly decorated seven-arched screen at the Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra, Ajmer

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp702–5 and pp731–2

Ships of the Thar Desert

The desert dwellers of Rajasthan could not survive without their camels. In the sandy, inhospitable expanse of the Thar Desert, it is their only means of transport, their beast of burden, as well as an important source of nourishment (camels' milk, slightly salty in taste, is drunk throughout Rajasthan's deserts). The hardy camel demands little in



Mural of camels

return. It can do without food and water for up to a month in winter, and a week in summer, tanking up on 70 litres (148 pints) of water at one go. The Rajasthanis' affection for his camel is evident at all the desert fairs, where camels are given pride of place, resplendent in their colourful tassels and jewellery.

VARIETIES OF CAMEL

Three varieties of camel inhabit Rajasthan. All of them have two rows of eyelashes which help keep the sand out of their eyes. Their humps contain a thick layer of fat, which shields their bodies from the scorching desert sun.



Bikaneri camels have hairy ears, and great load-bearing capacity and stamina.

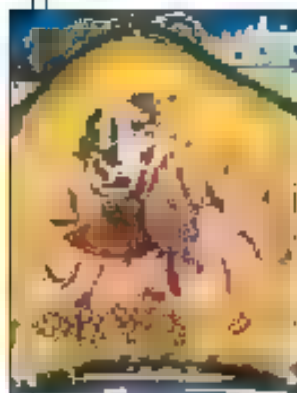
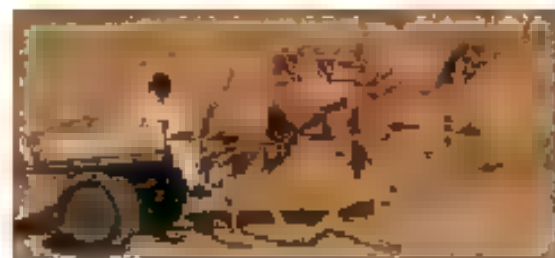


Jaisalmeri camels, with longer legs, can cover up to 22 km (14 miles) an hour.

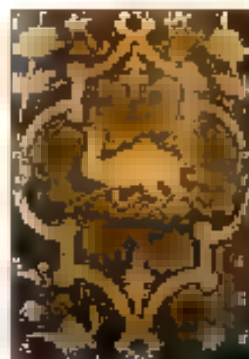


Gujarati camels are darker-haired and adept at traversing marshy areas such as the Rann of Kutch.

Camel carts, ingeniously equipped with old aircraft wheels, are a common sight in Rajasthan's cities.



Dhola and Maru, star-crossed lovers in Rajasthan folklore who eloped on their trusty camel, are a favourite theme in paintings.



Camel skin handicrafts include beautiful embossed water bottles, bags, slippers, and lacquer-painted lampshades, among other camel skin products.



Camel races at fairs test the evenness of a camel's gait by seeing how far it can carry a pot of milk without spilling any.



Camel cavalry regiments of the Indian Army have their origin in the camel regiments of the maharaja of Bikaner, which fought in Egypt in World War I. Today they patrol the desert borders.

Bikaner ①

Bikaner district 361 km (224 miles)

NW of Jaipur. 529,000

H *Dholi Maru Hotel, Pooran Singh Circle, (0151) 222 6701* **C** *Camel Festival (Jan), Jambheshwar Festival (Feb/Mar), Kolayat Fair (Nov)*

Along with Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, Bikaner was one of the three great Desert Kingdoms of Rajasthan and, like them, prospered because of its strategic location on the overland caravan trade route to Central Asia and China. It was founded in 1486 by Rao Bika, the disgruntled younger son of Rao Jodha, the ruler of Jodhpur (see pp 369–81), who left home in search of new territory to conquer.

Somewhat overshadowed by the splendours of Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, Bikaner nevertheless has a great deal to offer visitors, with its old walled town where camels saunter past colourful stalls, its many temples and palaces, and the magnificent Junagarh Fort, perhaps the best preserved and most ornately decorated of all the forts in Rajasthan.

Junagarh Fort

W Sat–Thu **W** **W** **W** **W** **W** extra charges. **Museum** **W** **W** **W** **W** **W** daily 10. Constructed between 1587 and 1593 by the third ruler of Bikaner, Rao Singh, Junagarh Fort is protected by a 986-m (3,235-ft) long sandstone wall with 37 bastions, a moat and – most effectively of all – by the forbidding expanse of the Thar Desert. Not surprisingly, the fort has never been conquered – a fact which explains its excellent state of preservation. Within the fort's austere stone walls are no less than 37 prettily decorated palaces, temples and pavilions, built by its successive rulers over the centuries – though in a harmonious continuity of



The imposing ramparts of the 16th-century Junagarh Fort

style. The most outstanding is the **Anup Mahal**, built by Maharaja Anup Singh in 1690 as his Hall of Private Audience. It was sumptuously decorated between 1787 and 1800 by

Maharaja Surat Singh. In an ingenious imitation of *Mughal pietra dura* work at a fraction of the cost, the lime-plaster walls of the Anup Mahal have been polished to a high lustre. They are covered with red and gold lacquer patterns, further embellished with mirrors and gold leaf.

The **Karan Mahal**, built between 1631 and 1669, is the Hall of Public Audience and is ornamented in a similar if somewhat less lavish style.

Two other gorgeous, heavily decorated palaces are the 17th-century **Chandra Mahal** ("Moon Palace") and **Phool Mahal** ("Flower Palace"). The latter contains Rao Bika's small low bed with carved silver legs, on which he slept with his feet reaching the ground. The bed was so designed to enable Rao Bika to jump quickly to his feet and fight off murderous intruders. The Chandra Mahal, which was the queens' palace, has carved marble panels depicting the Radha-Krishna legend, and both palaces have superb stone carving and *jalis*. The blue-and-gold **Badal Mahal** ("Cloud Palace") is covered with paintings of clouds, yellow streaks of lightning and rain showers – a favourite fantasy in this arid land. The **Hawa**

Mahal ("Palace of Winds") has a huge mirror positioned over the maharaja's bed, which apparently enabled him to view the courtyard below, thus alerting him to approaching danger. The oldest palace in the fort is **Tal Niwas**, dating to 1595 and decorated with floral motifs in red and gold. The newest palace is the huge **Durbar Niwas** ("Coronation Palace"), built in the early 20th century by Bikaner's most progressive ruler Sir Ganga Singh (c. 1887–1913), who gave Bikaner its railway link and built the Ganga Canal, which brought precious irrigation water to his kingdom. He was also



Maharaja's swing at Junagarh Fort



The luxurious interior of Anup Mahal with ornamental lacquer work

famous for hosting elaborate *shikars* (hunting expeditions) for visiting British dignitaries. The Durbar Niwas now houses the fort museum, whose armoury section includes such fascinating exhibits as a 56-kg (124-lb) suit of armour, a dagger with a pistol built into it, and swords with lion-shaped handles. Other exhibits include the fragrant sandalwood throne of the rulers, said to date back to their 6th-century ancestors who were the kings of Kannauj (Uttar Pradesh), and a curious half-spoon for soup, used by the maharaja to ensure that his luxuriant moustache remained pristine during meals.

Walled City

West end of MG Rd. **Shops** ☐ daily. In the old walled city entered through Kote Gate is the bazaar where excellent local handicrafts can be found, such as rugs and carpets, painted lampshades made of camel hide, and beautiful miniatures in the Bikaneri style. Savoury snacks (*bhujias*) are another local speciality and Bikaneri *bhujias* are renowned throughout India as are the sweets made of camel's milk. The grand 17th- and 18th-century *havelis* of Bikaner's wealthy merchants line the narrow lanes in the vicinity around Rampuria Street. Two of the most ornate are the **Rampuria** and

Kothari Havelis. The former is now a delightful heritage hotel. In the southwestern corner of the walled town are two Jain temples, dating from the early 16th century, the

Bhandeshwar and Sandeshwar Temples. Both are ornately carved and are embellished with frescoes, mirror-work and gold leaf scrollwork inside. They were built by two brothers who, having no children, constructed these masterpieces for posterity.

Lalgarh Palace

N of city centre. **Tel** (0151) 254 0201. **Museum** ☐ Thu-Tue. ☒ ☒ Lalgarh Palace, outside the walled town, is a sprawling extravaganza of carved friezes, *jalis*, pillars and arches in the distinctive reddish-pink local sandstone (which resulted in Bikaner being dubbed the "Red City"). Constructed between 1902 and 1926, it was designed by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob (*see p353*) in a style that combines traditional Rajput and Renaissance European features with Art Nouveau decor inside. Part of it has been converted into a hotel (*see p702*), and another section into a museum with vintage photographs and wildlife trophies. Lalgarh Palace's museum and beautiful gardens are open to visitors.

Environs

The **Camel Breeding Farm**, 9 km (6 miles) southeast of Bikaner, is best visited in the late afternoon when the camels return from grazing. Set up in 1975, the farm breeds nearly half the camels found in India, including those for the camel regiment of the Indian Army. **Gajner**, 30 km (19 miles) northwest of Bikaner, has the red sandstone Summer Palace of the maharajas, now a luxury hotel (*see p702*), and the Gajner National Park, home to black bucks, wild boars, desert foxes and a large number of migratory birds. The 17th-century **Karni Mata Temple** at

Deshnok, 30 km (19 miles) southeast of Bikaner, is also known as the Rat Temple, because of the hundreds of rats that swarm around the temple and its precincts. The rats are considered sacred and are fed sweets and milk by the priests and visitors, who believe that they are reincarnated holy men. The temple is dedicated to Karni Mata, an incarnation of Durga, and is entered through intricately carved silver doors presented by Sir Ganga Singh.

Camel Breeding Farm

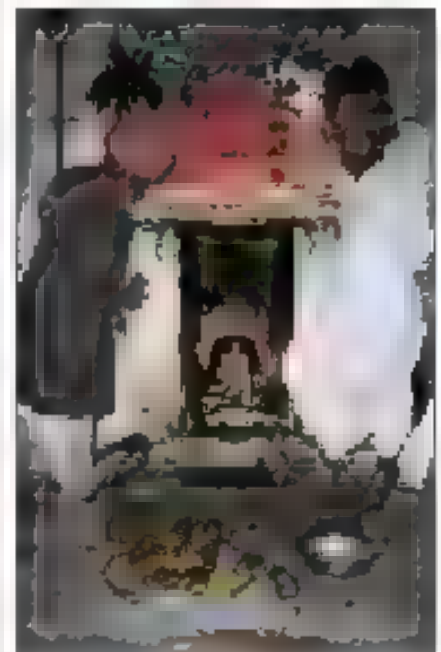
☐ Mon-Sat ☒ ☒

Karni Mata Temple

☐ daily ☒ Karni Mata Festival (Mar/Apr & Sep/Oct)



Coat of arms of Bikaner's rulers



Devotee feeding milk to rats at Karni Mata Temple, Deshnok

Phalodi 10

Jodhpur district, 150 km (93 miles) SW of Bikaner. ☒

This large town attracts visitors because of the lovely hamlet of Khichan, 4 km (2.5 miles) to its east. Khichan is famous for the demisette cranes that gather around its lake between September and March. The birds migrate here from the Mongolian steppes for the winter. Every day, the villagers spread grain on the fields for the birds, and as a result the number of cranes that come here has increased substantially over the years. At last count, 7,000 cranes spent the winter at Khichan.



One of the two cannons flanking the entrance to Lalgarh Palace

Jodhpur 15



Clock, Umaid Bhawan Palace

With the majestic Mehrangarh Fort towering over opulent palaces, colourful bazaars and the sands of the Thar Desert, Jodhpur epitomizes all the romance and feudal splendour of Rajasthan. Now the second largest city in the state, Jodhpur was founded in 1459 by Rao Jodha, the Rathore ruler of the kingdom of Marwar. Strategically located on the overland trade route, it soon became a flourishing trade centre. Its merchant class, known as the Marwaris (*see pp372*), have retained their entrepreneurial skills and

continue to run many of India's leading business houses. The special riding breeches, known the world over as jodhpurs, were designed here.

Mehrangarh Fort

See pp382-3

Sardar Bazaar

☐ daily

Jodhpur's bazaar lies in the heart of the old city, which is surrounded by a 10-km (6-mile) wall, pierced by eight gates. Clustered around a clock tower (built in 1912), the bazaar is a fascinating area to explore, with its little shops selling silver jewelry, lacquer bangles, tie-dyed

fabrics, soft camel leather shoes, puppets, clay figurines and colourful heaps of sweets and spices. The pavements are lined with henna artists who decorate women's palms with intricate, lacy patterns.

An interesting building in this area is the early 17th-century **Taleti Mahal**, its carved balconies supported by temple pillars. Built for a favourite royal concubine, it now houses a school. There are several other beautiful



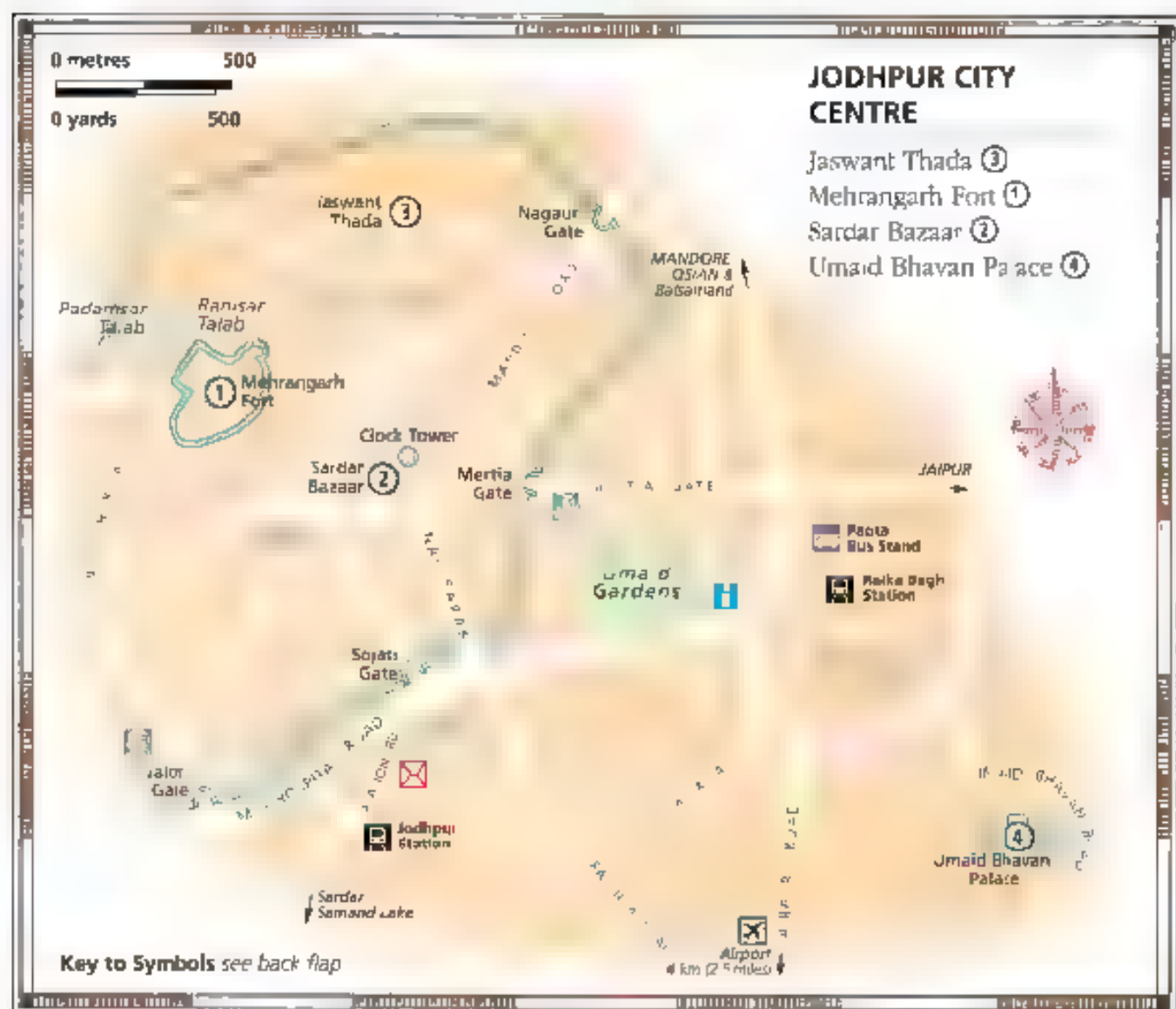
Blue-washed houses around Jodhpur's Mehrangarh Fort

houses in the bazaar area, mostly made of red sandstone and heavily carved.

Jaswant Thada

☐ daily

This elegant polished marble memorial with fine lattice carving is the *chhatra* (cenotaph) of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II (r 1878-95), whose innovative irrigation schemes brought water and prosperity to this parched land. Local people, who





Umaid Bhawan Palace, a fusion of Rajput, Jain and Art Deco styles

believe the maharaja has retained his healing touch come regularly to offer prayer and flowers at his shrine. Cenotaphs of subsequent rulers and members of the royal families are also located here, though earlier rulers have their memorials at Mandore.

III Umaid Bhawan Palace

☐ daily. ☎

This immense palace, built of creamy-pink sandstone and marble, is a prime example of princely India's opulence. Its 347 rooms include eight dining halls, two theatres, a ballroom, several lavishly decorated reception halls and a vast underground swimming pool. A 60-m (197-ft) dome covers the cavernous central hall which, at its inauguration, seated 1,000 people for dinner.

The palace was commissioned by Maharaja Umaid Singh, apparently to create jobs for his famine-stricken subjects. Begun in 1929, it took 3,000 men 15 years to complete. 29 km (12 miles) of railway tracks were also laid to bring the sandstone from the quarry. H.V. Lanchester, the architect of the Central Hall of Westminster in London, created a pleasing fusion of Rajput, Jain and European Art Deco styles for his royal patron.

Umaid Singh's grandson, Gaj Singh, still lives in a section of the palace, while the rest has been turned into a luxury hotel. The palace museum is open to visitors and has an impressive collection of decorated weapons, watches and fantastically-shaped clocks, paintings, French furniture and porcelain.

The road in front of it, leading to the smaller Apt Bhawan Palace, is lined with antique shops.

Environ

Mandore, 9 km (6 miles) north of Jodhpur, was the capital of the Rathore kings of Marwar until the 15th century, when Rao Jodha built a new capital at Jodhpur. Set around terraced garden on a hillside are the red sandstone *chhatris* of Jodhpur's earlier rulers. The most imposing is that of Apt Singh with its towering temple-like spire. When he died in 1724, his six wives and 58 concubines committed *sati* on his funeral pyre. The Hall of Heroes has 15 life-size statues of religious deities and

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Jodhpur district 331 km (206 miles) W of Jaipur ☎ 846,500
☒ 5 km (3 miles) S of city centre ☎ ☎ ☎ High Court Rd, (0291) 254 5083 ☎ Mon-Sat ☎ Jodhpur-Rajasthan International Folk Festival (Oct), Marwar Festival (Oct)

folk heroes. Further up the hill are the queens' cenotaphs (Raniyon ki Chhatri) and the tall and narrow 17th-century Ek Thamba Mahal Palace.

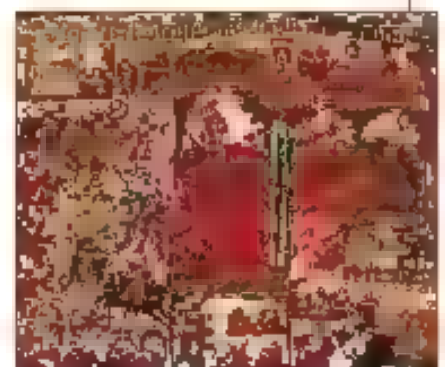
Balsamand, 6 km (4 miles) north of Jodhpur, has the 19th-century red sandstone water palace of the maharajas beside a large artificial lake. The **Sardar Samand Lake**, 55 km (34 miles) south of Jodhpur, attracts several water birds including egrets, his and pelicans. On its shores is the maharajas' Art Deco-style hunting lodge. The drive here passes through interesting Bishnoi villages (see p.385).



Jaswant Thada, the 19th-century cenotaph of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II

BHOPA BALLADEERS

Like the troubadours of medieval Europe, the nomadic Bhopa tribe of western Rajasthan enjoys a lively tradition of storytelling through song and dance. A long painted scroll (known as a *phad*) is rather like a comic strip, crammed with paintings depicting dramatic events in the life of a Marwar hero, the brave warrior Pabuji. The Bhopa unrolls his scroll, and narrates the story through songs, highlighting relevant pictures on the scroll with a lantern, while his wife brings the tale to life with animated dance sequences. The Bhopa performances draw enthusiastic crowds at fairs and festivals across the Marwar region.



Painted scroll used by Bhopas

Jodhpur: Mehrangarh Fort



Sati handprints on
Loha Pol

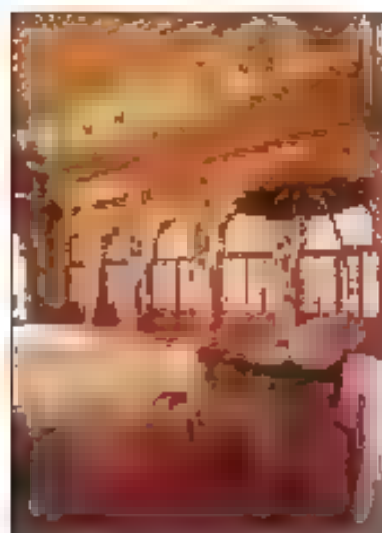
Rising sheer out of a 125-m (410-ft) high rock, Mehrangarh is perhaps the most majestic of Rajasthan's forts. Described by an awe-struck Rudyard Kipling as "the creation of angels, fairies and giants", Mehrangarh's forbidding ramparts are in sharp contrast to the flamboyantly decorated palaces within. Founded by Rao Jodha

in 1459, the sandstone fort was added to by later rulers, mostly between the mid-17th and mid-19th centuries. The royal apartments within the fort now form part of an outstanding museum.



The Ramparts

The bastioned walls, parts of which are hewn out of the rock itself, are in places 24-m (79-ft) thick and 40-m (131 ft) high. Perched on them are old cannons.



Nagnechiaji Mandir has a 14th-century image of the goddess Kaladevi, the family deity of the rulers.

★ Phool Mahal

Built between 1730 and 1750, this is the fort's most opulent chamber, richly gilded and painted. It was used for royal celebrations.

Suraj Pol is the entrance to the museum.

Zenana
Chowk

Palki Khana

Shringar Chowk

Carved balconies crown the towering bastions.

Shringar Chowk

This courtyard has the coronation throne of the Jodhpur rulers, made of white marble. Every ruler after Rao Jodha was crowned on it.

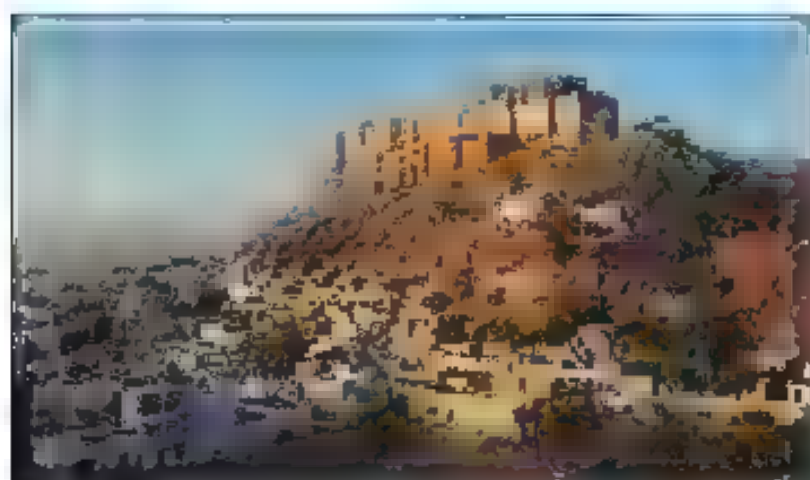
Chamundi Devi Mandir

Dedicated to the goddess Durga in her wrathful aspect.

★ STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Phool Mahal
- ★ Moti Mahal





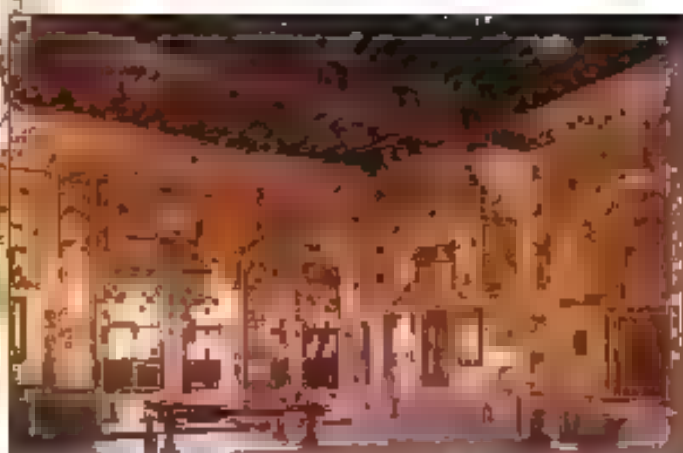
The blue-washed houses of Brahmapuri village, clustered below the ramparts of Mehrangarh Fort

Chokelao Palace, now under restoration, was a pleasure palace built around a sunken garden



★ Moti Mahal

Built between 1581 and 1597 this magnificent room was the Hall of Private Audience. Its ceiling is decorated with mirrors and gold leaf and crushed seashells were mixed with plaster to give its walls a lustrous sheen



Takhat Mahal

This exuberantly painted room with a wooden ceiling was the favourite retreat of Maharaja Takhat Singh (r 1843–73), who had 30 queens and numerous concubines

Jhanki Mahal is a long gallery with exquisite latticed stone screens

Phool Mahal

Sileh Khana's exceptional collection of weapons includes damascened Mughal daggers, gem-studded shields and special armour for war elephants

Jai Pol

One of the seven fortified gates to the fort, it is now the main entrance. It was built in 1806 by Maharaja Man Singh to commemorate a victory in battle



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Mehrangarh Fort and Museum ☐ daily ☒ Museum
Trust, (0291) 254 8790
extra charges

Exploring Mehrangarh Fort Museum

The Mehrangarh Fort Museum is justly regarded as the best of the many palace museums in Rajasthan. Its rich and varied collection includes a golden throne, fine miniature paintings, traditional costumes and fascinating weapons. Particularly magnificent are the skilfully restored royal chambers, which present a vivid picture of princely life and culture in Rajasthan

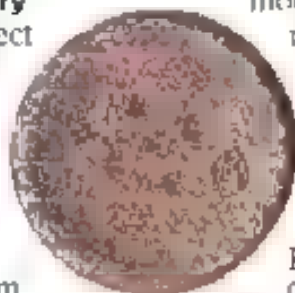


Maharaja's cradle with a mechanical rocking system, in Jhanki Mahal

The entrance to the museum is through the Suraj Pol on the fort's southeastern side. Inside, to the right, is the **Palki Khana** with a collection of richly gilded palanquins. Along with the impressive elephant howdahs on display in the **Howdah Gallery** next door, these reflect the importance of grand processions in courtly life. Particularly impressive is a 17th-century howdah made of solid silver, a gift from the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. Another treasure is a spectacular palanquin covered in gold leaf, dating to 1730. This stands in the **Daulat Khana** (Treasury Hall), just before the **Sileh Khana** with its superb collection of weapons.

From here steps lead up to the **Umaid Mahal**, which exhibits miniature paintings of the Jodhpur School. Heavily influenced by the Mughal style, these paintings provide fascinating vignettes of life at court – the rulers riding camels with their courtesans, playing polo and leading ceremonial processions. Here too is a grand silk canopy that was used by the rulers for outdoor camps.

The next chamber, on the floor above, is the splendidly gilded, 18th-century **Phool Mahal** ("Flower Palace"), the Hall of Public Audience. It also has superb miniatures, including a set of 36 *Raga-mala* paintings that depict the moods of various musical ragas.



A gem-studded rhino-hide shield

The 19th-century **Takhat Mahal**, the chamber of a pleasure-loving ruler, is exuberantly painted with murals of Radha and Krishna and dancing maidens. The glass Christmas tree balls hanging from the ceiling were added in the 1930s. **Sardar Vilas** just below Takhat Mahal showcases Jodhpur's fine woodwork. Particularly striking is a door inlaid with ivory.

The next chamber is **Jhanki Mahal** or "Peeping Palace", so called because the women of the royal zenana could peep through its latticed stone screens to observe the ceremonies and festivities in the courtyards below. It now has a collection of royal cradles, including one with an ingenious mechanical rocking system, surmounted by guardian angels. From here a courtyard leads to the 16th-

century **Moti Mahal** or "Pearl Palace". A palmist sits in the courtyard to foretell the futures of visitors.

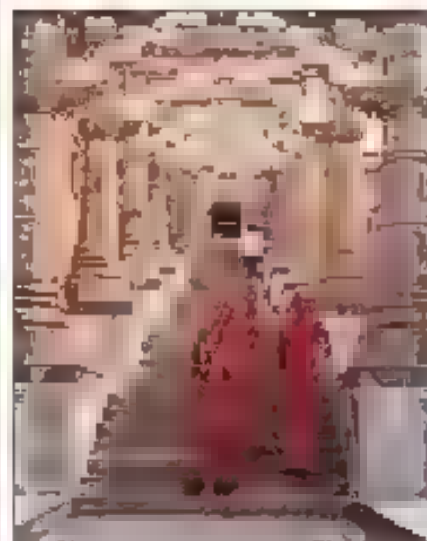
The museum also has a fine collection of Rajasthani turbans and folk music instruments. Rooms displaying costumes, royal tents and special treasures are under preparation.

Environ

Osian 69 km (40 miles) northwest of Jodhpur, is the site of 16 outstanding Jain and Hindu temples. Built by wealthy traders between the 8th and 12th centuries, when Osian was an important stop on the caravan trade route to Central Asia, they represent the earliest phase of temple architecture in Rajasthan.

Famous for the rich variety and exuberance of their sculptural decoration are the 11 temples at the southern and western edge of Osian village. Of these, the most impressive is the 8th-century **Mahavira Temple** with a superb ceiling and 20 carved pillars holding up the main portico. Equally beautiful are the classically elegant 11th-century **Sun Temple** and the profusely sculpted **Vishnu** and **Harihara Temples** from the 8th–9th centuries.

The other temples are on a hill east of the village, dominated by the 12th-century **Sachiya Mata Temple** approached through a series of beautifully carved arches. This temple is particularly popular with infertile women who believe that Sachiya Mata, an incarnation of Durga, has special powers to help them bear children.



Sachiya Mata Temple, Osian

Tour of Marwar Crafts Villages ①

The arid countryside south of Jodhpur is dotted with villages, their mud and thatch huts inhabited by the Bishnois and communities of potters and weavers. A daylong tour of this area provides a memorable opportunity to observe the rhythm of daily life in these hamlets, experience the warm hospitality of the villagers, and see beautiful traditional crafts being practised.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length. 55 km (34 miles)
Getting around: Allow 6–7 hours for the trip. Refreshments are available at Gudda Bishnoi, Salawas and Kakuni. The heritage hotels at Rohet and Luni (Fort Chanwa, offer good food and are pleasant places for a break. Hotels and travel agencies in Jodhpur can arrange taxis. A four wheel drive is recommended.



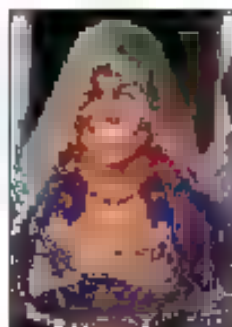
Salawas ③
 The villagers here are skilled weavers of *dhurries* (rugs) in traditional geometric patterns and vegetable colours. They are made of cotton or camel hair.



Kakuni ④
 This village, 26 km (16 miles) south of Jodhpur, is famous for its pottery, made of the fine local clay.

THE BISHNOIS

The Bishnois, passionate environmentalists, are followers of a 15th-century sage Jambheshwar whose creed is contained in 29 (*bis noi*, principles. Most of these focus on environmental protection, and the Bishnois' faith bids them to protect every living being, if necessary with their lives. Thus, the otherwise timid blackbuck can be seen roaming freely near Bishnoi villages, confident that it will be unharmed. Bishnois believe they will be reborn as deer.



Bishnoi woman

Jodhpur ①
 This historic and beautiful city is on the edge of the Thar Desert.

Gudda Bishnoi ②
 The Bishnois in this hamlet tend camels and goats. The men wear only white, but the women wear vivid colours and silver jewellery.



Rohet ⑤
 The 17th-century palace fort here is now a heritage hotel (see p704) surrounded by villages of leather craftsmen.

KEY

- Tour route
- Other roads
- River

0 km 3
 0 miles 3

Jaisalmer 17

Today a remote outpost in the Thar Desert, Jaisalmer was founded in the 12th century by Maharawal Jaisal of the Bhatt Rajput clan. It was once a flourishing trade centre, strategically located on the busy caravan trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Its earlier rulers grew rich by looting gems, silk and opium from the caravans, but by the 16th century Jaisalmer had become a peaceful town, whose wealthy traders and rulers vied with each other to beautify their austere desert surroundings with splendid palaces and *havelis*. Made of the local golden-yellow sandstone, they are the most spectacular examples of the Rajasthani stonemason's art. In the 18th century, with the growth of sea ports at Surat and Bombay (Mumbai), Jaisalmer's importance dwindled. But the buildings from its golden age still stand, clustered around a magnificent fort (see pp388–9).

Manik Chowk

Located at the entrance to the fort, this is the main marketplace, where caravans used to halt in the past. The tiny shops sell camel hair blankets and gorgeous embroidered textiles. Desert nomads and their camels add to the bazaars' colour.

Badal Vilas

Near Amar Sagar Gate ☐ daily
This late 19th-century palace is distinguished by its minaretted tower in the shape of a *tazia* – the ornately decorated tower of wood, metal and coloured paper, carried by Shia Muslims at Maharram (see p669). The *Tazia Tower* of Badal Vilas, built in the mid-20th century, was a parting gift to the maharawal

from the town's Shia stone-carvers, many of whom moved to Pakistan after Independence.

Gadisagar Lake

SE of the city walls
This rainwater reservoir built in 1367 was once the city's sole source of water. Lined with ghats and temples, it comes alive during the Gangaur festival (March/April), when the maharawal leads a procession here. The *wasatfa* gateway leading to the tank was built by a royal courtesan, Teeta, whose audacity so enraged the

queens that they demanded its instant demolition. The quick-witted Teeta immediately had a statue of Krishna installed on top, thereby ensuring not only that the gateway would stand, but that everyone would bow before passing through it.

Salim Singh's Haveli

Near the Fort entrance
Local guides can arrange visits for a fee
This *haveli* was built in 1815 by a powerful prime minister of Jaisalmer. Narrow at

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Jaisalmer district 285 kms (177 miles), W of Jodhpur 58,300.
 Tourist Reception Centre, Station Rd. (02992) 25 2406. Desert Festival (Feb).
Gangaur Festival (Mar/Apr)

the base, its six storeys grow wider at each level, and all its 38 balconies have different designs. Peacocks dance between the arches on the topmost balcony, and blue cupolas cap the roof. The rear portion of this *haveli* was, sadly, damaged during the Gujarat earthquake in January 2001, but visitors are still allowed in.

Nathmalji's Haveli

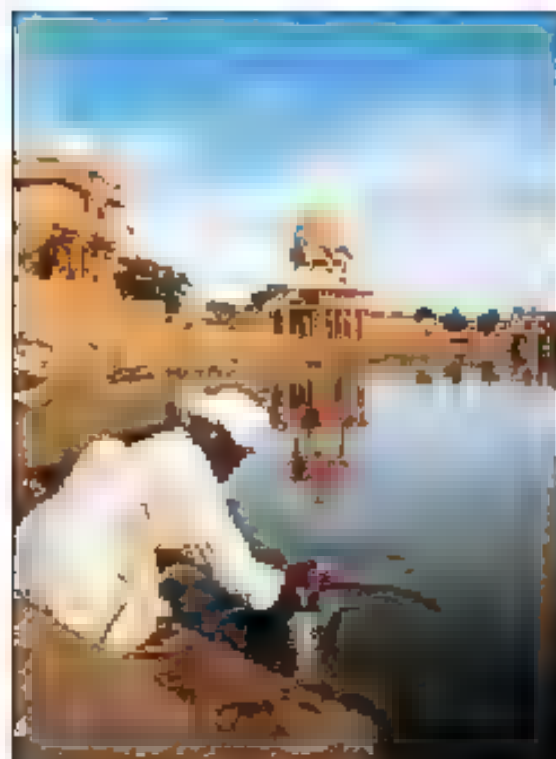
Near Gandhi Chowk. Local guides can arrange visits for a fee.
Built in 1855 by another prime minister of Jaisalmer, the particular charm of this five-storeyed mansion is that the two sides of its façade were carved by two craftsman-brothers, Hatha and Lahu. Though at first glance they seem identical, the details on each side are actually quite different. Besides the usual floral, geometric and animal patterns, this *haveli*'s motifs also reflect new influences – a European-style horse and carriage, bicycles and steam engines.

Patwon ki Haveli

E of Nathmalji's Haveli ☐ daily
This enormous and very elaborate *haveli* was built between 1805 and 1855 by Guman Chand Patwa, one of Jaisalmer's richest merchants and bankers, who dealt in silk, brocade and opium, and had a chain of trading stations stretching from Afghanistan to China. This six-storeyed mansion has five adjoining apartments for each of his sons, and 66 balconies. The curved eaves on the balconies suggest a fleet of sailing boats, and the numerous latticed windows are carved with breathtaking intricacy.



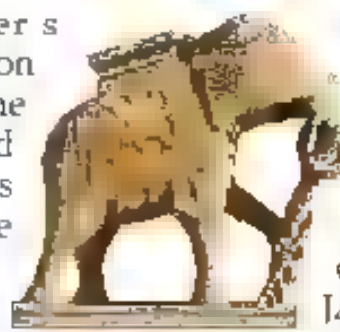
Jaisalmeri smoking a hookah



Gadisagar Lake, lined with ghats

The Jaisalmer Haveli

After the fort, Jaisalmer's *havelis* are its greatest attraction. Built in the 19th century by the town's merchants and ministers, these mansions dominate its labyrinthine lanes. The *havelis* of Salm Singh, Nathmal, and Patwon are the finest examples of this type of architecture, their golden stone façades so finely carved that they could be made of



Carved elephant

face. Several generations of an extended family lived together in these huge mansions, which usually contained secluded women's quarters that outsiders could not enter. Jaisalmer's stonemasons still practise their art, doing restoration work in the fort, and working abroad for wealthy new patrons in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia.



The entrance of most havelis is on a plinth, raised high above street level, to prevent the desert sand from blowing into the rooms. The ground floor had no living rooms and was usually used as a warehouse or storeroom.



The inner courtyard, found in all havelis, was a protected place for children to play in and for women to attend to their daily chores in privacy.



Jalis, or latticed stone screens, display a rich variety of patterns. They keep out the harsh desert sun but let in fresh air. They also enabled women to observe street life without being seen.



Jharokhas, or projecting balconies, have curved *chhatra* eaves. Their purpose was more decorative than functional, and they gave the stonemasons an opportunity to display the full range of their creativity and skill.



Yellow sandstone lends itself particularly well to fine carving. Soft when newly quarried, the stone gradually becomes harder with exposure.



Narrow streets in the neighbourhood of Patwon ki Haveli, lined with intricately carved façades, retain their traditional ambience.

Jaisalmer Fort



Detail from
Jaisalmer Fort

Jaisalmer Fort rises like a fabulous mirage out of the sands of the Thar Desert, the awesome contours of its 99 bastions softened by the golden hue of the stone. Built in 1156 by Maharawal Jaisal and added to by his successors, this citadel stands on the peak of the 80-m (263-ft) high Trikuta Hill. In medieval times, Jaisalmer's entire population lived within the fort and even

now, thousands of people reside here, making it India's only living fort. Royal palaces, a cluster of Jain temples, mansions and shops are all contained within its walls.



The southern ramparts, built of stone without any mortar

Gyan Bhandar in the basement of the Sambhavnatha Temple, is a library of illustrated Jain palm-leaf manuscripts, some of them dating to the 11th century.

Intricate sandstone carvings are found in these seven temples dedicated to the Jain *tirthankaras* including Rishabhdeo, Sambhavnatha, Parsvanatha and others.

★ Jain Temples

Exquisitely carved Jain temples were built in the 15th and 16th centuries by the town's wealthy traders.

The ramparts, with an inner parallel wall, have huge cannonballs perched on top, ready to crush invaders.

JAISALMER IN JEOPARDY

The growth of tourism together with recent efforts to green the nearby desert have, ironically, posed a threat to the fort. Built for an arid climate that hardly ever experienced rainfall, the fort had no provision for water supply or drainage. Now, with rising ground water levels in the area, and the introduction of piped water in the fort, seepage has made the golden stone crumble in places. Conservation efforts by Indian and international organizations are now under way to save this unique fort and town.



The 12th-century Jaisalmer Fort, threatened by rising damp

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Jain Temples
- ★ Moti Mahal
- ★ Dussehra Chowk



Royal Complex

The seven-storeyed palace complex consists of several interconnected palaces, built between the 16th and 19th centuries

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Jaisalmer Fort. Rajasthan Tourism, Station Rd, 02992 25 2406 ☐ daily extra charges.

Jain Temples ☐ daily extra charges. **Gyan Bhandar** ☐ daily

Annapurna Bhandar was originally the fort's granary. Its ground floor has a temple

Moti Mahal



Sarvottam Vilas

Brilliant blue tiles and glass mosaic work decorate this mid-18th century palace

Naqqar Khana, or "Drummers Gallery", has a richly carved octagonal balcony



★ Moti Mahal

Floral paintings and carved doors embellish this 18th-century palace

Rani Mahal

★ Dussehra Chowk

Festivals, royal performances and parades took place in this open plaza, framed by the palace complex. The rulers' marble throne overlooks the plaza



Exploring Jaisalmer's Outer Sights

The environs of Jaisalmer are dotted with sites of both architectural and natural beauty. These include beautiful temples, the haunting ruins of the old capital, a fascinating desert village, rolling sand dunes, and the habitat of a rare desert bird, the great Indian bustard.



Manganiyar musicians, whose ballads recount Jaisalmer's history

■ Bhattiani Rani Temple

2 km (1.3 miles) S of fort. ☐ daily
This secluded Hindu shrine was built in honour of a 19th-century Jaisalmer princess who, surprisingly, committed *sati* on her brother-in-law's funeral pyre. A clan of Musam musicians, the Manganiyars, are the caretakers of the temple, and recount this story, with its intriguing undertones, in their soulful ballads about Jaisalmer's history.

■ Bada Bagh

7 km (4 miles) N of fort. 🏠
The royal cenotaphs, with elaborately carved ceilings and fine equestrian statues of the rulers, are set in a green oasis. Next to them is the Bharonji Temple, frequented by childless women who offer their silver girdles to the deity, in the hope that he will cure their infertility.

■ Lodurva

15 km (9 miles) NW of Jaisalmer.
The capital of the Bhatt Rajputs before they built the fort at Jaisalmer, Lodurva was abandoned after it was sacked by Muslim invaders in the 11th century. A group of Jain temples dominates this site where the remains of many other fine buildings lie concealed beneath the desert sands. A beautiful *torana*

leads to the main temple which houses a metal sculpture of the Kalpavriksha ("Celestial Tree"). It is believed to have wish-fulfilling powers.

■ Akal Fossil Park

17 km (11 miles) SE of Jaisalmer

☐ daily 🏠 📺

Extraordinary fossilized tree trunks, some of them 180 million years old, can be seen in this park. They bear witness to the fact that this arid area was once covered with dense forest.



Great Indian bustard

■ Khuri

40 km (25 miles) SW of Jaisalmer.
Set among sand dunes, this little village is a superb example of desert architecture. Functional as well as beautiful, the village houses have thick mud walls that provide protection against the fierce desert heat and winds, while

the paintings that decorate their exteriors bring colour and beauty to the brown, parched environs.

■ Desert National Park

43 km (27 miles) W of Jaisalmer. For permission, contact Collector's Office, Jaisalmer, (02992) 25 2201. 🏠 📺

Jeep & Camel safaris

This fascinating park is spread over 3,162 sq km (1,221 sq miles) of scrub and sandy wasteland, close to the border with Pakistan. Its star attraction is the great Indian bustard (*Choriotis nigriceps*), a large bird with a height of 1.2 m (4 ft). The bustard had been hunted almost to extinction, and only about 1,000 remain now, but sightings are likely here. Other wildlife includes sand grouse, several species of falcon and vulture, desert fox, and *chinkara* (Indian gazelle).

Barmer 19

Barmer district, 160 km (99 miles) SE of Jaisalmer. 🏠 📺 📺 Rajasthan Tourism, Khartai, (02982) 22 2956.

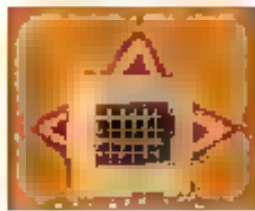
🏠 Tiwara Cattle Fair (Jan/Feb), Thar Desert Festival (Mar)

This remote desert town, whose arid soil cannot support agriculture, has become a major centre for desert handicrafts. Wood-carving, blockprinted textiles, embroidery and carpet weaving are the main source of livelihood for its people. They also lavish their skills on their mud huts, which are beautifully decorated with geometric and floral patterns. Barmer buzzes with activity during the annual Tiwara Fair (January–February), one of the many large cattle fairs in Rajasthan.



Visitors on a camel safari near Jaisalmer

Camel Safari around Jaisalmer 13

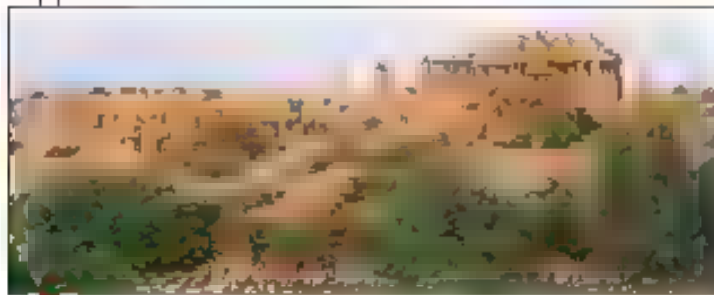


Window of a desert mud house

The fascinating desertscape around Jaisalmer is best explored on a camel safari. A two-day excursion takes in historic sights and villages of sheep and camel herders. Overnight stays in tents offer magical dawns and sunsets amid the dunes. Cushions are provided, but riders are advised to carry an extra one, to help soften the effects of the camel's lurching gait.

TIPS FOR RIDERS

Duration: Two days and two nights. **Day 1:** Jaisalmer to Lodurva via Bada Bagh and Ramkunda. 8 km (11 miles). **Day 2:** Lodurva to Sam via Kahala and Kanol, 20 km (12 miles). Sam to Jaisalmer (by jeep), 45 km (28 miles). **Overnight stays:** Camps at Lodurva and Sam. For more details on safaris see p751, for tour operators see p755.

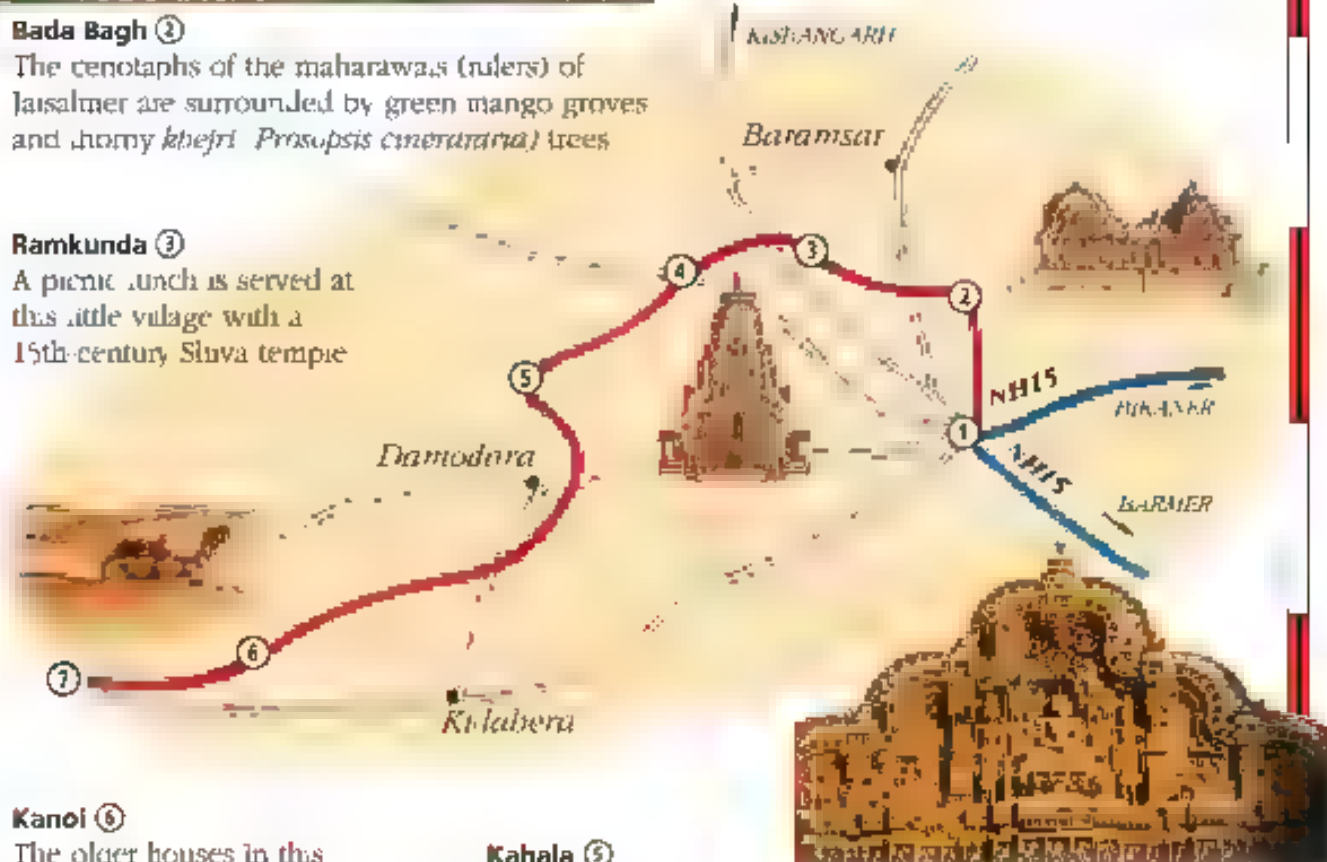


Bada Bagh ③

The cenotaphs of the maharajas (rulers) of Jaisalmer are surrounded by green mango groves and thorny *khejri* (*Prosopis cineraria*) trees.

Ramkunda ③

A picnic lunch is served at this little village with a 15th-century Shiva temple.



Kanol ⑥

The older houses in this village are painted with flowers, animals and birds. The village craftsmen make elaborately carved camel saddles inlaid with brass.

Kahala ⑤

This hamlet of mud houses is inhabited by herders of goats and sheep. They also weave attractive blankets.

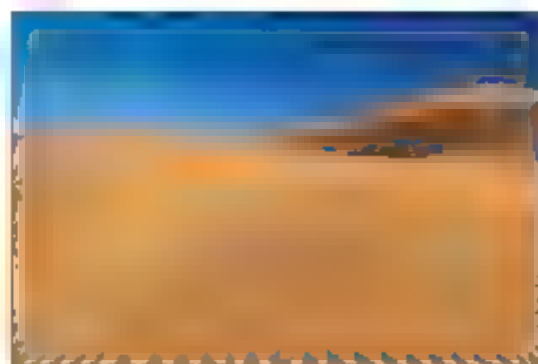
Lodurva ④

The night is spent at the old capital of the maharajas, which has lovely Jain temples. Dinner is served under a star-studded sky.

0 km 5
0 miles 5

KEY

- Tour route
- Other roads
- National highway



Sam ⑦

Rippling sand dunes stretch as far as the eye can see. The 45 km (28-mile) journey back to Jaisalmer the next morning is by jeep.







The intricately carved Vimala Vasahi Temple

Mount Abu 20

Sirohi district 185 km (115 miles)
W of Udaipur 22,100 Abu
Rd, 20 km (12 miles, SE of town
centre, then bus. opp main
bus station, (02974) 23 5151
 Summer Festival (Jun)

Rajasthan's only hill station, Mount Abu has one of India's most spectacular sights – the **Dilwara Jain Temples**. This group of five marble temples is situated on a hill 3 km (2 miles) northeast of the town. The two most outstanding are the **Vimala Vasahi Temple** and the **Luna Vasahi Temple** which have incredibly intricate and delicate carvings. The sculptural details on the various doorways, archways, pillars and ceilings of both these temples are simply breathtaking: the marble worked so finely that in places it is almost translucent.

The Vimala Vasahi Temple, dedicated to the first Jain *tirthankara*, Adinath, was built in 1031 by Vimala Shah, a wealthy prime minister of the Solanki kings of Gujarat. A statue of him seated on an elephant is in a pavilion to the right of the entrance. Inside, graceful nymphs and musicians, spirited horses and elephants adorn the arches and pillars, and the superb 11-tiered domed ceiling in the main hall. The inner sanctum has a statue of Adinath in tranquil meditation, while 52 carved niches contain images

of the other *tirthankaras*. The Luna Vasahi Temple, dedicated to Nemirath, the 22nd Jain *tirthankara*, dates to 1231 and is even more ornately carved. Its most glorious feature, the main hall, has a magnificent lotus-shaped, tiered pendant carved from a single block of marble descending from its domed ceiling. Behind the main shrine is the fascinating Hall of Donors, with a series of figures

mounted on elephants, some in black marble. There are also life-size statues of the donors and their wives, with every detail of their dress and jewelry exquisitely and painstakingly carved.

The focal point of Mount Abu town is **Nakki Lake**, ringed by colonial mansions dating to the late 19th century and the summer palaces of Rajput rulers. The curiously shaped **Toad's Rock** overlooks the lake, and

Sunset Point, southwest of the lake, offers some spectacular views from a stone terrace.

About 4 km (2.5 miles) below Mount Abu, just off the main highway leading to the town, is the historic **Gaumukh** ("Cow's Mouth") Temple with a natural spring flowing from the mouth of a marble cow.

Dilwara Jain Temples

daily to menstruating women
Leather articles are not allowed inside.

Environs

Achalgarh, 8 km (5 miles) beyond Dilwara, has the ruins of a 15th-century fort, and a Shiva temple. The latter has a statue of Nandi made with over 4,000 kg (8,819 lbs) of gold, silver, brass and copper. A five-minute walk from the temple is **Guru Shikhar**, Rajasthan's highest point at 1,721 m (5,646 ft). It is marked by a small but exquisite Vishnu temple.

Ranakpur 20

Rajsamand district 90 km (56 miles)
NW of Udaipur Temple Complex
 daily to menstruating women.
Leather articles are not allowed inside.

Set in a secluded, wooded valley of the Aravalli Hills, the 15th-century Ranakpur temple complex, dominated by the great **Adinath Temple**, is one of the five great holy places of the Jain faith. The grand scale and sheer architectural complexity of the white marble temple distinguish it as perhaps the single most impressive example of Western Indian temple architecture (see pp396–7).

The temple has an unusual four-sided plan, with four separate entrances. Each entrance leads through a veritable forest of columns, and a number of beautifully ornamented halls and chapels, to the central sanctum containing a four-faced image of Adinath.

Each of the temple's 1,444 pillars is carved with different patterns of flora, motifs, and the play of light and shadow.



Dancer, Luna Vasahi Temple



View of the Jain temple complex at Ranakpur



The winding ramparts of the indomitable Kumbhalgarh Fort

on the pillars as the sun moves from east to west each day is one of the glories of this monument. Equally stunning is the superb filigree carving on the concentric ceiling pendants, and the exuberant grace of the goddesses who form the support brackets. On one of the columns facing the sanctum, a carved panel with two figures on it depicts Dharna Shah, the builder of the temple, who was a minister of the maharana of Mewar and his architect, Depa.

A wall topped with spires surrounds this serene temple complex, which also has a Hindu Sun Temple, and two other Jain temples. Of these the 15th-century Parsvanatha Temple is distinguished by the exceptionally fine pierced stonework on its windows.

Kumbhalgarh ㊦

Rajsamand district, 63 km (39 miles) N of Udaipur. ㊦ Kankrolī, 35 km (21 miles) SE of Kumbhalgarh, then bus. ㊦ ㊦

Like a gigantic brown snake, the great ramparts of Kumbhalgarh Fort wind along the rugged contours of the Aravalli Hills for 36 km (22 miles). This massive 15th-century fort, strategically located at a height of 1,050 m (3,445 ft) along the border between Marwar (Jodhpur) and Mewar (Udaipur), was

known as "The Eye of Mewar" because it offered a commanding view of the countryside for miles around. Built by Maharana Kumbha (r 1433–68), who also built the great fort of Chittorgarh (see p330), Kumbhalgarh was justly reputed to be the most impregnable fort in Rajasthan. Its ramparts are wide enough for six horsemen to ride abreast, and seven fortified gates, studded with threatening spikes, lead to its entrance.

The crenelated walls of the fort enclose the smaller fortress of Kartargarh, several palaces and temples now in ruins, fields, water reservoirs and stables. Standing at the highest point of the fort is the **Badal Mahal**, a 19th-century addition with airy chambers and fine wall paintings of hunting scenes. The 15th-century **Neelkantha Temple**,

which also lies within the fort, has a huge Shivalinga and is still in use.

Another interesting temple is the **Navachoki Mamdeva Temple**, in a gorge to the east of Kartargarh. It contains several slabs of black granite inscribed with the history of Mewar, the earliest slab dating to 1491. Next to it is the cenotaph of Maharana Kumbha.

Kumbhalgarh was also the birthplace of Maharana Pratap (1540–97), a great warrior king famous for his heroic stand against the armies of the Mughal emperor Akbar.

Environs

The **Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary** covers 578 sq km (223 sq miles) of the Aravalli Hills, west of the fort, on the leeward side. Panther, flying squirrel, wolf and many bird species can be seen here.

Kankrolī, 35 km (21 miles) southeast of Kumbhalgarh, has the 17th-century Dwarkadishi Temple on the southern shore of Rajsamand Lake. The western shore is lined with lovely marble pavilions and ghats.

The charming little town of **Deogarh**, 55 km (34 miles) north of Kumbhalgarh, set among lakes and hills, has the 17th-century Rajmahal Palace with exquisite wall murals, and the Anjaneshwar Mahadev Temple in a cave in the hillside. Deogarh is also a popular base for horse safaris which explore this picturesque part of Mewar.



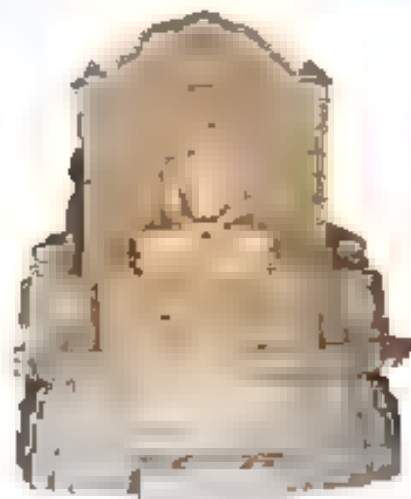
A deity on the fort wall, believed to prevent evil happenings

Marblework in Jain Temples



Detail from
Ranakpur

Rajasthan's most outstanding Jain temples, at Ranakpur and at Dilwara in Mount Abu (*see p394*), are breathtaking in the wealth and variety of their sculptural ornamentation. Made of white marble quarried at Makrana, which also provided the marble for the Taj Mahal, the Ranakpur and Dilwara temples are architectural marvels. Above all, they are testimony to the incredible artistry of the marble carvers who created these masterpieces. Visitors should use binoculars to fully appreciate the astounding work on the ceilings and pillars.



This four-faced image of Adinath, the first tirthankara, stands in Ranakpur's main sanctum. It faces the four cardinal directions.

THE JAIN RELIGION



Jain nuns with
covered mouths

Jainism, founded in the 6th century BC, is based on a doctrine of non-violence towards all living beings. Jains are strict vegetarians, and the more orthodox ones cover their mouths to avoid inadvertently swallowing living organisms. Jains believe in 24 tirthankaras or crossing-makers, enlightened beings who guide others across the "river of transmigration" (the journey of the soul from one life to the next). The first of the tirthankaras was Adinath, also known as Rishabdeo, and the last was Mahavira (born in 540 BC). Regarded as the religion's founder, his 2,600th birth anniversary was celebrated in 2001. Jainism attracted many followers among the wealthy traders and merchants of Western India, who were also politically powerful as financiers and ministers in Rajput princely states. As acts of devotion and penance, they financed the building of several elaborately carved temples in Gujarat and Rajasthan.



HALL OF PILLARS

A forest of carved columns connected by wavy arches leads to the main sanctum at Dilwara's Vimala Vasahi Temple. It was built in the 11th century.

EXTERIOR

The uncarved exterior of Ranakpur's 15th-century Adinath Temple contrasts sharply with the profuse decoration inside. This symbolizes the Jain belief in the insignificance of outward forms, and the importance of a rich inner life.



CORBELLED CEILINGS

The ceilings are carved in concentric tiers to symbolize the Jain view of the universe as a series of cosmic cycles. Marble carvers were paid in gold according to the weight of the marble shavings they presented at the end of each day's work.



Dancers and deities, gracefully sculpted are the struts that support the ceiling



This Ranakpur ceiling is a typical example of the Rajasthani marble carvers' art. It is so finely worked that the marble is translucent in places.



Sculptured panels at Ranakpur show dancers full of grace and movement.

Pillars in Dilwara are densely carved with floral motifs and figures in niches. No two pillars are identical in their ornamentation.



Kalpavalli medallions with their exquisite patterns of foliage, tendrils and flowers, feature at both Dilwara and Ranakpur.

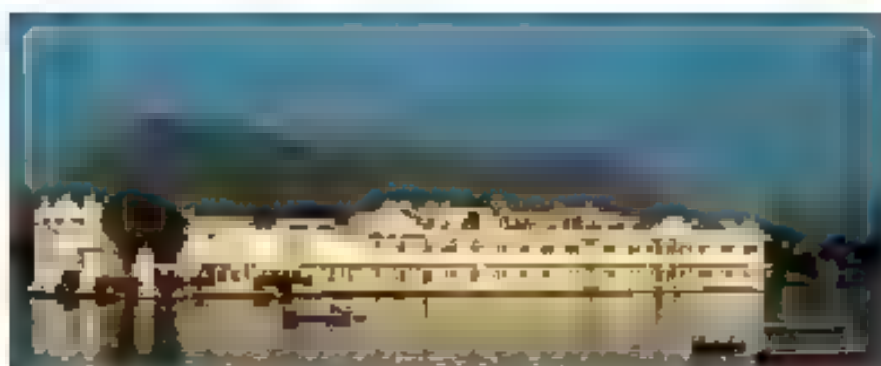


The Parsvanatha plaque shows the 23rd tirthankara protected by a multi-headed cobra. It is set into the southern wall of the Adinath Temple at Ranakpur.



Udaipur ②

This fairy-tale city with its marble palaces and lakes surrounded by a ring of hills, was founded by Maharana Uda Singh in 1559, and became the capital of Mewar after the fall of Chittorgarh in 1567 (see p402). The rulers of Mewar, who belonged to the Sisodia clan of Rajputs, traced their dynasty back to AD 566. Fiercely independent, they refused matrimonial alliances with the Mughals, and took great pride in their reputation as the prime defenders of Rajput honour. The city is dominated by the massive City Palace, which overlooks Lake Pichola with its romantic island palaces. Picturesque *havelis*, ghats and temples line the lake front, with the lively bazaars of the old walled city stretching behind them.



Jag Niwas, or the Lake Palace, in its magical setting on Lake Pichola

City Palace

See pp400–401

Jag Mandir

Lake Pichola ☐ daily 🚢 City Palace Jetty 🚢 **Jag Niwas** Tel (0294) 252 8016. 🕒 open to non-residents

Jag Mandir, with its lush gardens and marble chambers exquisitely inlaid with coloured stone, was built in 1620. Eight stone elephants stand solemn guard at its entrance. Between 1623 and 1624, this island palace provided refuge to Prince

Khurram (who would later become the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan) while he rebelled against his father. It is believed to have inspired many of his ideas for the Taj Mahal.

Jag Niwas, or the Lake Palace, built between 1734 and 1751, was once a royal summer retreat and is now one of the world's great hotels (see p705). It is also a popular location for film shoots (including James Bond's *Octopussy*). Both palaces can be seen on a boat tour of Lake Pichola.

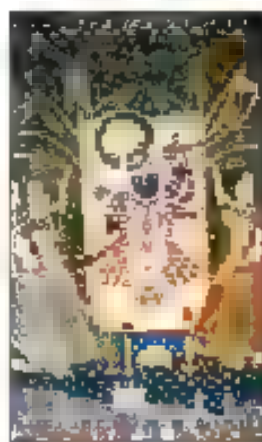
Jagdish Mandir

Moti Chhoti Rd ☐ daily

Bagore ki Haveli Gangaur Ghat

Tel (0294) 25 3858 🕒

This 17th-century temple, just north of the City Palace's main gate, has an enormous black stone image of Vishnu in its profusely carved main shrine. The entrance is flanked by stone elephants, and a superb bronze image of Garuda (the mythical bird who is Vishnu's vehicle) stands in front of the temple. Nearby, at Gangaur Ghat, is the 18th-



Pichhwal painting

century **Bagore ki Haveli**, now a museum exhibiting Udaipur's traditional arts and crafts, costumes, musical instruments and marblwork. Folk music and dance performances are held here every evening at 7pm.

The old walled city, a jumble of shops and houses, many with beautifully painted façades, lies east of the Jagdish Mandir. In its narrow lanes are the **Bapu** and **Bara Bazaars** selling wooden toys, puppets, textiles, jewels and *pichhwalis*.



A view of Lake Pichola, with the Jag Mandir Palace on an island

Fateh Sagar Lake

Fateh Sagar Rd

North of Lake Pichola's Fateh Sagar Lake, with a garden café on its island. Overlooking it is Moti Magri Hill with a statue of Udaipur's great 16th-century warrior, Maharana Pratap, and his valiant steed Chetak.

Saheliyon ki Bari

Saheli Marg. ☐ daily 🕒

This delightful 18th-century retreat in the north of the city (its name means "Garden of the Maids of Honour") has ornamental fountains, a lotus pool and a rose garden. It was built for a queen of Udaipur, whose dowry included 48 maids.

Ahar

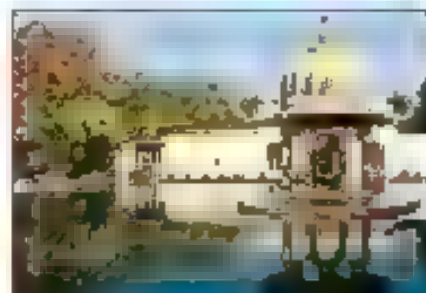
Ashok Nagar Rd. **Museum**

☐ Sat–Thu 🕒 public hols 🕒

Located 3 km (2 miles) east of Udaipur, Ahar has the impressive cenotaphs of 19 Mewar rulers, and a small archaeological museum.

Environs

Shilpgram, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Udaipur, is a lively ethnographic crafts village, with artisans, folk performers, and replicas of traditional houses. Camel rides are also available.



Pavilion in the Saheliyon ki Bari, an 18th-century queen's garden



Nagda's Saas-Bahu Temples, seen through the finely-carved torana

Eklingji 22 km (14 miles) northeast of Udaipur, is a complex of 108 temples and shrines, dedicated to Lord Shiva. It marks the site where the founder of the Mewar ruling dynasty, Bappa Rawal received special blessings from a sage who lived here. The main temple dates to the 6th century. Built of marble and granite, it includes an impressive pillared hall and a four-faced image of Shiva crafted in black marble with a silver Nandi facing it.

Nagda a short distance away from Eklingji, is worth a visit for the Saas-Bahu Temples ("Mother and Daughter-in-law

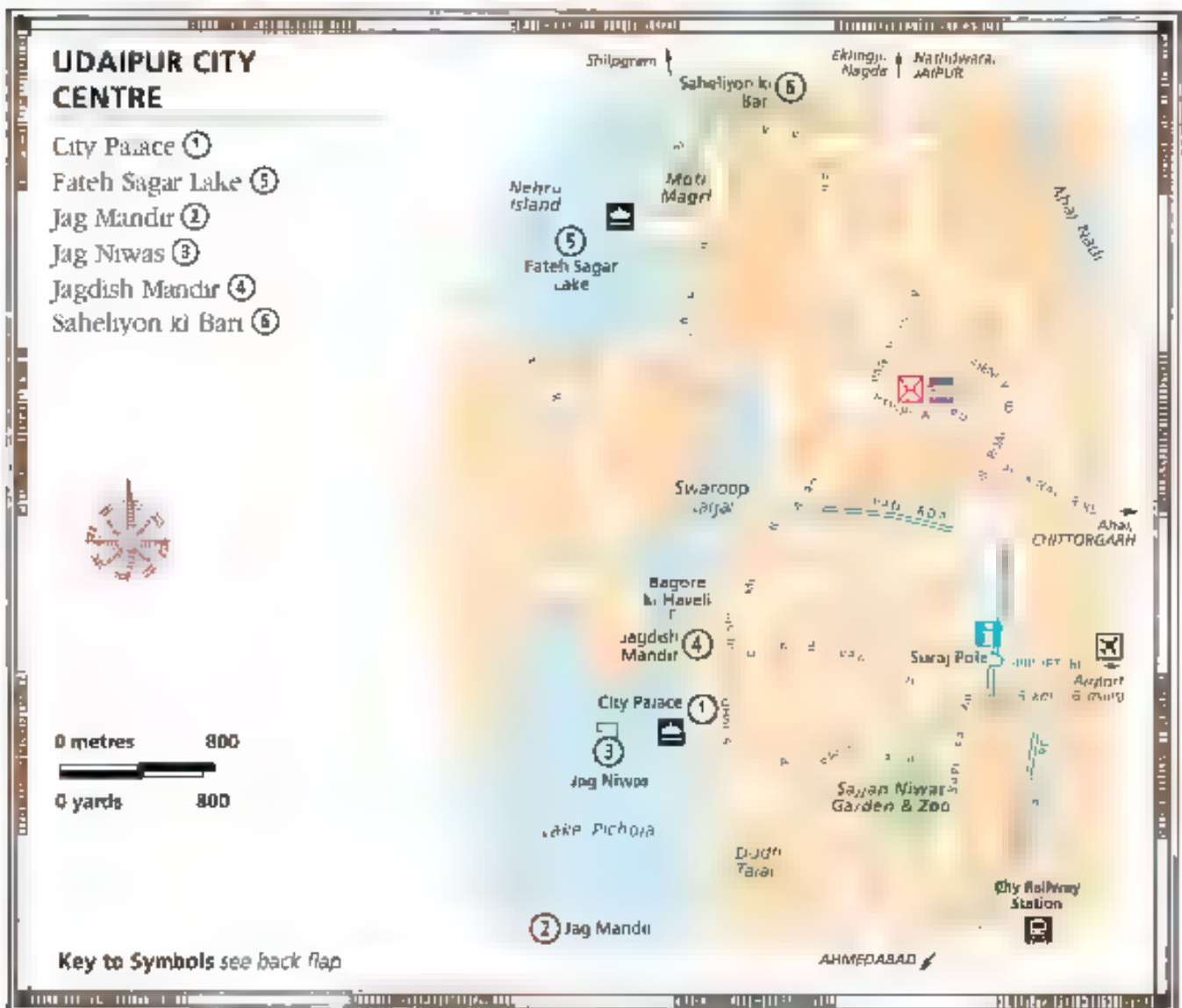
Temples"), twin structures dedicated to Vishnu. The 11th-century temples are entered through a finely carved *torana* and are renowned for their elaborate sculptures depicting amorous couples and scenes from the epic *Ramayana*.

One of Rajasthan's main pilgrimage sites is the 18th-century Shrinathji Temple at **Nathdwara**, 48 km (30 miles) northeast of Udaipur. The main deity is Lord Krishna known locally as Shrinathji. His black stone image was brought here from Mathura (see p152) to save it from destruction by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in the

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Udaipur district 269 km (167 miles) S of Jodhpur 389,400
 25 km (16 miles) E of city centre. Rajasthan Tourism, Suraj Poi, (0294) 241 1535. Gangaur Festival (Mar/Apr), Mewar Festival (Apr)

17th century. Beautiful painted cloth hangings known as *picbhruas* are hung behind it. Non-Hindus cannot enter the temple, but Nathdwara town's picturesque bazaar, with its *picbhruas* painters at work, is worth a visit. *Picbhruas*, one of the most vibrant forms of Indian painting, are done on stiff cloth in vegetable and mineral colours. They depict 24 scenes from the Krishna legend, each linked with a particular festival or holy day. At the centre of each painting is a stylised image of Lord Krishna with dusky skin, sparkling eyes and intricate jewellery set against a dark ground of verdant foliage, birds, animals and skyscapes. Around the deity are cows, monkeys and devotees.



Udaipur: City Palace



Royal sun symbol

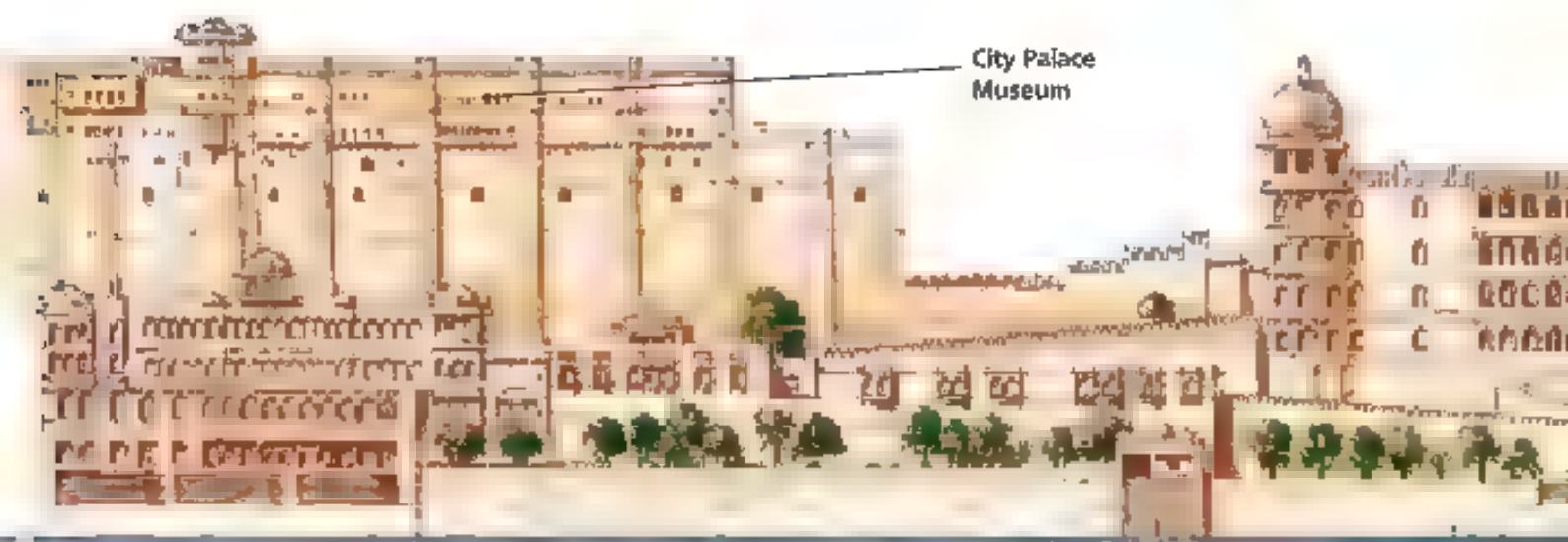
Stretching along the eastern shore of Lake Pichola, Udaipur's City Palace is a fascinating combination of Rajput military architecture and Mughal-style decorative techniques. Its stern fortress-like façade topped by a profusion of graceful balconies, cupolas and turrets, has been aptly described by one writer as a massive

plain cake topped with fabulous icing. The largest palace in Rajasthan, covering an area of 2 ha (5 acres), the City Palace is actually a complex of several palaces, built or added to by 22 different maharanas between the 16th and 20th centuries. Much of it is now a museum, and parts of it are luxury hotels.



Fateh Prakash

This early 20th-century palace, now a hotel, has a magnificent Durbar Hall and a gallery of crystal furniture.



City Palace Museum



Rajya Angan Chowk, with a temple to the goddess Dhuni Mata

Exploring the City Palace

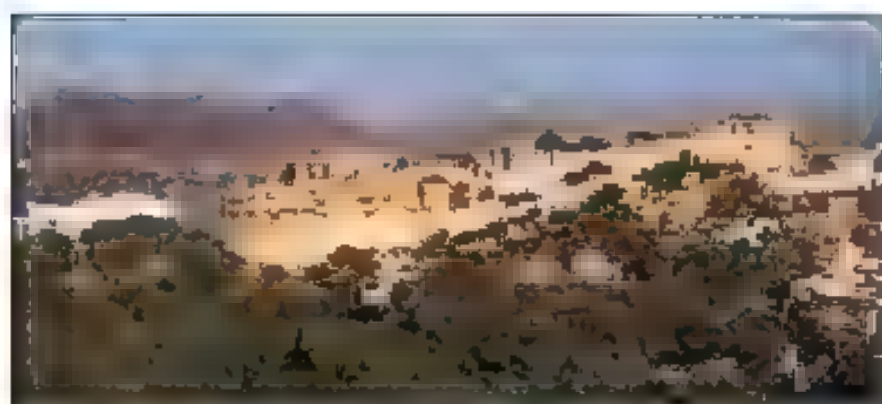
The older section of the City Palace complex dates from 1568. Beyond its fortified walls is a maze of royal apartments, reception halls and courtyards. They are linked to each other by narrow passages and steep staircases – a feature typical of Rajput palaces of that period, designed to confuse invaders. The superb **City Palace**

Museum is spread out through several palaces in this section, and is entered through the imposing **Tripolia Gate** (built in 1713). Above the entrance is the Mewar crest – a large Sun face (ruler, forcing the Sisodia clan's claim to be descended from the Sun), flanked by Rajput and Bhil warriors (the tribal Bhils, skilled archers, played a heroic

role in Mewar's great battles). Beyond this is the **Ganesh Deorhi Gate** where entrance tickets for the museum are checked. It leads into a courtyard decorated with frescoes of horses and elephants, and a marble relief of the god Ganesha surrounded by dazzling mirror and glass inlay.

The next courtyard is the **Rajya Angan Chowk**, from where steps lead to the **Chandra Mahal** (built in 1620). One of the loveliest palaces in the complex, it has beautiful columns, fretwork windows and striking marble reliefs of Rajput women, one of whom carries a shield. There is a magical view of Lake Pichola and its island palaces from here.

Another flight of steps from here leads to the charming **Bari Mahal** (built in 1699). Perched 27 m (89 ft) above the ground, it is built on a terraced hillside that is com-



A view of the City Palace, on the eastern shore of Lake Pichola

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

City Palace Complex

Tel (0294) 252 8016 ☐ daily

☐ ☐ restricted ☐ ☐ Museum

☐ extra charges ☐ ☐

Fateh Prakash ☐ open to non-residents. **Shiv Niwas** ☐ open to non-residents

Shambhu Niwas
is now home to
the maharana's
descendants

Shiv Niwas
*This sumptuously
decorated crescent-shaped
palace was the royal
guesthouse and is now a
luxury hotel (see p705)*

Fateh Prakash

Shiv Niwas



Kanch Burj, with its dazzling
decoration of red and silver glass

pletely enclosed within the
palace walls. Deep halls with
receding rows of carved
arches open into an enchant-
ing courtyard with a marble
pool in the middle. Tall *neem*
trees stand around it, pro-
viding dappled shade.

The Ban Mahal leads to the
Dilkhushal Mahal (built in
1620) with two remarkable

chambers – the Kanch Burj
("Glass Turret") inlaid with red
and silver glass, and the
Krishna Niwas which exhibits
outstanding Mewar miniature
paintings (see p465). This was
the room of 16-
year-old Princess
Krishna Kaman
who committed
suicide in 1807
when rival suitors
from Jodhpur and
Jaipur threatened
to go to war over
her hand.

To the left of this
palace is the ornate
Moti Mahal, the
chamber of the
dissolute Maharana
Jawan Singh
(r 1828–38), who
once promised a dancing girl
his kingdom if she could
walk a tightrope across Lake
Pichola. The girl had almost
reached when the maharana's
alarmed courtiers cut the rope,
and the dancer drowned. Still

further left is the **Mor Chowk**
("Peacock Courtyard") with its
brilliantly coloured 19th-
century mosaics of three
dancing peacocks.

The southern end of the City

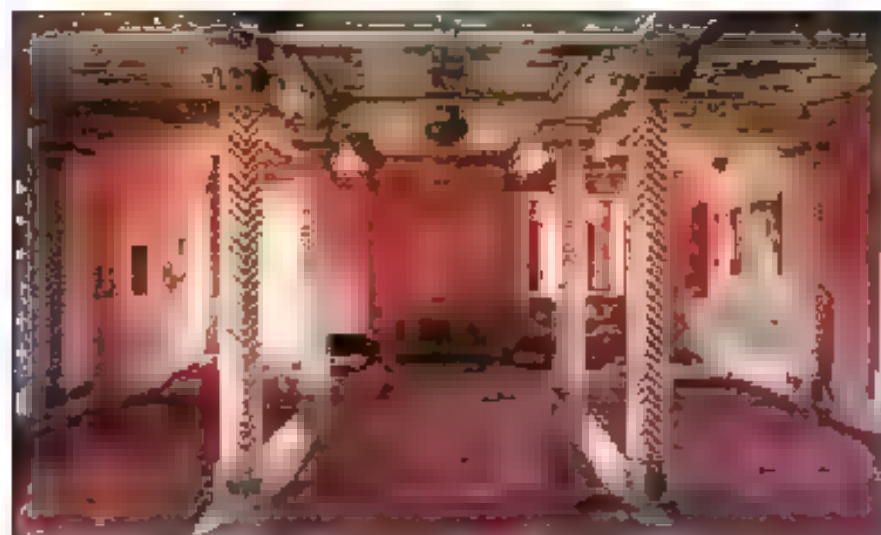
Palace complex
has three other
opulent palaces
built in the late
19th and early 20th
centuries.

Shambhu Niwas
where the descen-
dants of the rulers
now live. **Fateh
Prakash** with its
magnificent
Durbar Hall, fine
portraits and
gallery of crystal
furniture and the
semi-circular **Shiv**

Niwas built as the royal
guesthouse (Queen Elizabeth
II once stayed here). Fateh
Prakash and Shiv Niwas are
now luxury hotels, but are
open to non-residents for
tours and meals.



Mosaic of dancing peacock
in the Mor Chowk



A colourfully painted chamber in Juna Mahal, Dungarpur

Dungarpur 24

Dungarpur district 110 km (68 miles)

S of Udaipur 42,550

Vagad Festival (Jan/Feb),
Baneshwar Festival (Feb)

This remote, relatively unknown town boasts some unexpected artistic treasures. Dominating Dungarpur is the seven-storeyed **Juna Mahal** built in the 13th century on a large rock. The interior of this palace-fort, in contrast to its rather battered exterior, glows with exuberant ornamentation, and contains some of the most beautiful frescoes to be seen in Rajasthan. Remarkably well-preserved, these include a series of erotic paintings from the *Kama Sutra* in the erstwhile ruler's bedroom, on the top floor of the palace.

The 19th-century **Udai Vilas Palace** beside a lake is built of local grey-green granite in a blend of Rajput and Mughal styles. Rising from the centre of its courtyard is a fantastic four-storeyed pavilion with cusped arches, densely carved friezes, and a profusion of

canopies and balconies. The large room on its top storey is inlaid with a variety of semi-precious stones.

Chittorgarh 25

Chittorgarh district 115 km (72 miles)

NE of Udaipur
Janta Avas Grah, Station Rd, 01472,
24 1089 Meera Utsav (Oct)

The great, battle-scarred Chittorgarh Fort epitomizes in its tragic history the valour, romance, chivalry and strict death-before-dishonour code glorified in Rajput myths and legends. Sprawling across 280 ha (692 acres), atop a steep 180-m (591-ft) high rocky hill, Chittorgarh's ruined palaces, temples and towers bear witness to its illustrious and turbulent past, when it was the capital of the Sisodia rulers of Mewar, between the 12th and 16th centuries.

As Rajasthan's mightiest fort, it was the target of successive invaders. The first siege, in 1303, was by Sultan Alaaddin

Khalji (see p48), whose goal was to capture not only the fort but also the queen, Rani Padmini, whose legendary beauty the sultan had glimpsed reflected in a mirror. When defeat seemed inevitable, Rani Padmini along with 13,000 women committed *jaubar* – a ritual form of mass suicide by immolation, practised by Rajput women to escape dishonour at the hands of their enemies. It is said that 50,000 Rajput warriors died in the ensuing battle. Alaaddin's army then proceeded to sack the fort and destroyed many of its buildings. Within a few years, however, the ruler's grandson had regained it for the Sisodia dynasty.

The next great battle, this time against Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in 1535, saw the Queen Mother, Rani Jawaharbai, lead a cavalry charge and die on the battlefield along with the flower of Rajput youth. Once again, thousands of women inside the fort committed *jaubar*. The third and final assault on Chittorgarh was led by the Mughal emperor Akbar, who was able to capture it in 1567. Chittorgarh was abandoned thereafter, and the Sisodias moved their capital to Udaipur (see pp198–9).

Seven massive spiked gates lead to the fort. The first building to the right is **Rana Kumbha's Palace** (built between 1443 and 1468), probably the earliest surviving example of a Rajput palace.

Its northern side has a profusion of richly carved balconies.



A view of the impressive Chittorgarh Fort, spread over a rocky hill

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp702–5 and pp731–2

and a unique stepped wall. Elephant stables and a council chamber comprise its public areas, while the private apartments are a maze of small rooms, including a zenana section. Near it are the 20th-century **Fateh Prakash Palace**, which now houses a museum of sculpture found on the site, the **Kumbha Shyam Temple** dating to the 15th-century with a fine sculpture of Vishnu in his Varaha (boar) incarnation, and the **Meerabai Temple**, built in 1440 by Meerabai, (see p49) another remarkable Mewar queen. A mystic and a poetess, she defied Rajput convention and devoted her life to the worship of Lord Krishna.

The main street runs south of this temple towards the nine-storeyed **Vijay Stambh** ("Victory Tower"), built by

Maharana Kumbha between 1458 and 1468, to commemorate his victory over Sultan Mahmud of Malwa (see p247). The view from the top of this extraordinary 36-m (118-ft) high sandstone structure, richly carved with gods and goddesses, is magnificent. The main street continues further south past noble men's mansions to the **Gaumukh Reservoir** fed by an underground spring, and the 16th-century **Kalika Mata Temple**, built over the original Sun Temple which was destroyed during the devastating siege of 1303.

Opposite this temple stands the 19th-century reconstruction of **Padmini's Palace** with a lake pavilion adjacent to it. The palace contains the mirror in which Alauddin Khilji supposedly saw her reflection. Standing farther south, past some Jain temples, is the **Kirti Stambh**. This seven-storeyed tower is dedicated to the first Jain *tirthankara*, Adinath.

Fateh Prakash Museum
☐ Sat-Thu. ☒ free on Mon



The 11th-century temple of the Sun God, in Jhalrapatan

Jhalawar 26

Jhalawar district 323 km (201 miles) S of Jaipur 48,100 **Hotel Chandrawati**, (07432) 23 0081 **Chandrabhaga Cattle Fair** (Oct/Nov)

This delightful little town, surrounded by orange groves and poppy fields, is dominated by a 19th-century fort, the seat of the erstwhile princes of Jhalawar. It now houses government offices. An incongruous yet charming part of the fort is the **Bhavani Natya Shala Theatre** (built in 1921), which was modelled on the grand opera houses the maharaja had seen on his European tours. The old walled town of **Jhalrapatan** ("City of Belis"), 6 km (4 miles) south of the fort, has a splendid cluster of 11th-century temples. Of these the most impressive is the **Surya Temple** with its stunning image of the Sun God. About 1.5 km (1 mile) south of this temple, on the banks of the Chandrabhaga river, stands the superbly carved 7th-century **Chandra Mauleshwar Temple**.

Environs

The 14th-century **Ghagron Fort**, 10 km (6 miles) west of Jhalawar, is situated amid a landscape of hills, woods and fields, and surrounded on three sides by the Kali, Sindh and Ahu rivers.

The lush forests, cliffs and grasslands of **Darrah Wildlife Sanctuary** 70 km (44 miles) west of Jhalawar, look just as they do in the famous Kota paintings (see p405) of hunting scenes – only the tigers and princes are now missing.

Kota 27

Kota district 261 km (162 miles) S of Jaipur 696,000 **Hotel Chambal**, 10744, 232 7695 **Dussehra Mela** (Sep/Oct)

The imposing façade of Kota's fortified **City Palace**, which dates back to 1625, stretches along the banks of the Chambal river, recalling the princely past of this now heavily industrialized city. Kota's artistic heritage is well-represented in the palace apartments – every available surface is covered with miniature paintings, mirrorwork, marbles and mosaics. Particularly resplendent is the Durbar Hall, with its ebony and-ivory doors, and paintings depicting Kota's history. Many of the royal apartments now form part of the excellent **Rao Madho Singh Museum**, which has a fine collection of weapons and royal regalia.

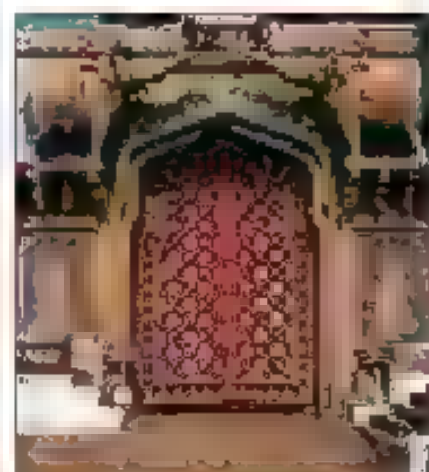
On Kishorsagar Lake, in the middle of the town, is the charming island palace known as **Jag Mandir** (see front cover) built in the 18th century by a Kota queen who yearned for her childhood home in Udaipur (see p398).

Rao Madho Singh Museum

☐ Sat-Thu. ☒

Environs

Bardoli, 55 km (34 miles) southwest of Kota, has one of Rajasthan's most beautiful temple complexes. The 9th-century Ghateshwar Mahadev temple has an outstanding sculpture of Nataraja (the dancing Shiva) on the door of its sanctum.



Ebony-and-ivory door in the 17th-century City Palace, Kota



View of Bundi, nestled in a narrow valley of the Aravalli Hills

Bundi 28

Bundi district 215 km (134 miles) S of Jaipur RR 350

Rajasthan Tourism, Circuit House, (0747) 244 3697 daily

Gangaur (Mar/Apr)

Bundi is often described as the undiscovered jewel of Rajasthan. Surrounded on three sides by the

rugged, thickly forested Aravalli Hills, this walled town has retained much of its historic character. The

Taragarh Fort crowns the crest of a steep hill overlooking the town, while the

Garh Palace spills picturesquely down the hillside.

This palace is Bundi's — and Rajasthan's — jewel. Lieutenant Colonel James Tod,

(1782–1855), 1st British Political Agent and author of the authoritative *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*,

wrote that the coup d'oeil of the castle and palace of Boondi, from whichever side you approach it, is the most striking in India".

The state of Bundi was founded in 1441 by Rao Deva of the "fire-born" Hada Chauhan Rajput clan, and the massive, square Taragarh Fort dates to his reign. Work on the palace began in the 16th century, and it was added to by successive rulers over the next 200 years at different levels on the hillside. Unlike most other palaces in Rajasthan, there is very little Mughal influence in its architecture.

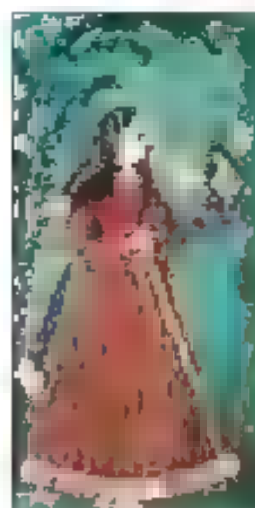
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The Garh Palace represents a rare example of the pure Rajput style, with curved roofs, capping pavilions and kiosks, a profusion of temple columns and ornamental brackets, and typically Rajput motifs such as elephants and lotus flowers. Unusually, the palace is not built of the sandstone favoured by most

other Rajput kingdoms, but of a hard, green-tinged serpentine stone, quarried locally. This stone, unlike sandstone, does not lend itself to fine carving.

Instead, Garh Palace was embellished by superb paintings. The palace is entered through the imposing **Hathia Pol** ("Elephant Gate- way"), flanked by two towers and topped by a pair of

large painted elephants. The most spectacular parts of the palace are the **Chattar Mahal** (built in 1660) and the **Chitrashala**, an arcaded gallery built between 1738 and 1770, overlooking a hanging garden. The murals in these are regarded as among the finest examples of Rajput painting. The themes they cover include scenes from religious ceremonies, hunting scenes and other princely amusements. The colours are predominantly blue and green, with touches of deep red and yellow. In the middle of the town



Painting from the Chitrashala

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is the **Naval Sagar Lake**, with a little temple on an island in its centre. The fort and palace reflected in the lake make a pretty sight.

Bundi has over 50 stepwells, of which the most beautiful is the 46-m (151-ft) deep **Rani-ki-Baori**, also in the centre of town. Built in the 17th century, it is strikingly similar to Adaraj Vav in Gujarat (see pp414–15), with richly decorated archways and sculptures of Vishnu's ten avatars (see p679).

Situated at the northern edge of the town is the 18th-century **Sukh Niwas Mahal**, a romantic summer palace overlooking **Jait Sagar Lake**. Standing at the opposite end of the lake are the royal cenotaphs, and at its western edge is an elegant hunting tower, the **Shikar Burj**.

Environs

Bijolia, 50 km (31 miles) southwest of Bundi, on the road to Chittorgarh, has a group of three beautiful 13th-century temples, dedicated to Shiva. **Menal**, lying 20 km (12 miles) further along the same road, is a delightful wooded spot with 11th-century temples standing near a gorge.

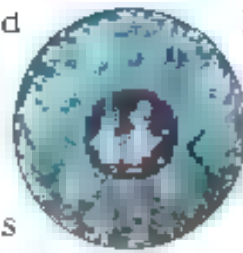
Tonk, 113 km (70 miles) north of Bundi, was once the capital of the only Muslim princely state in Rajasthan. Founded in the early 19th-century, its main attraction is the splendid **Sunehri Kothi** ("Golden Mansion") within the palace complex, every inch of its interior covered with gold leaf, lacquerwork, moulded stucco and striking mirrorwork. Stained-glass windows bathe this opulent hall in glowing colours. Tonk's Arabic and Persian Research Institute has rare illuminated medieval Islamic manuscripts.



The gilded interior of Sunehri Kothi in Tonk

Rajasthani Miniature Painting

The intricate and vivid paintings of Rajasthan's princely states grew out of illustrated Jain and Hindu sacred texts. Originally, they depicted mainly religious themes, in bold lines and bright primary colours. After the 17th century, however, the influence of the more sophisticated Mughal-Persian art tradition brought greater delicacy of line, and a wider range of colours and themes into

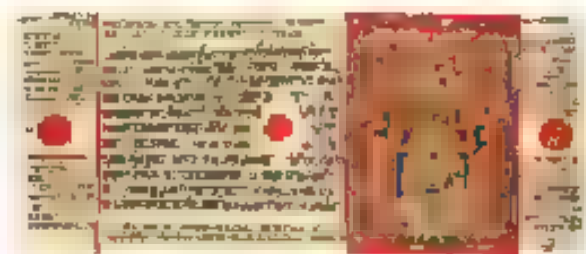


Radha and Krishna, Bundi

Rajasthani art. By the 18th century, many princely states such as Kishangarh, Mewar, Bundi and Kota had developed their own distinctive styles. In most schools of Rajasthani painting, however, human figures are shown in profile, and different colours, seasons, flowers and animals are used symbolically to express a variety of moods. These various schools of miniature painting continue to flourish in Rajasthan today.



The Maharana Celebrating Gangaur (1715)



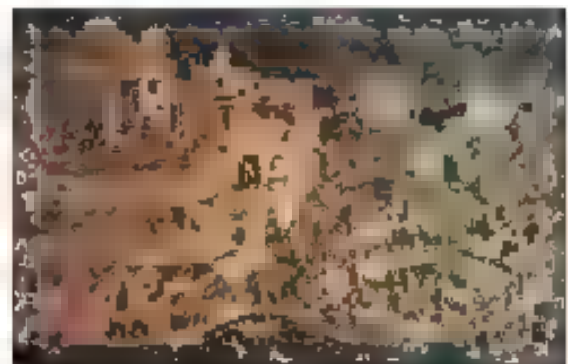
Jain religious text, early 17th century

MEWAR PAINTINGS

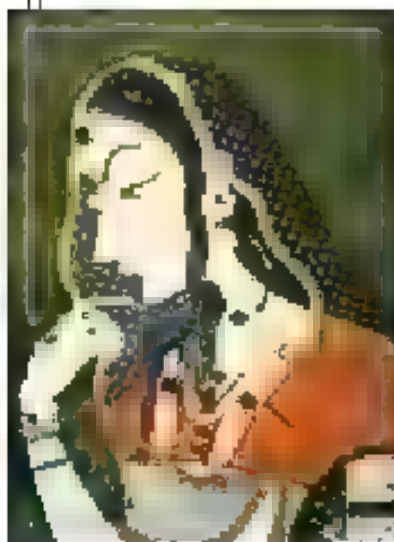
Large, detailed compositions, showing scenes from the lives of the maharanas of Udaipur, are characteristic of the Mewar School. The paintings depict festivals, grand processions, historic battles and religious ceremonies. The intricate detail was achieved by using just a single squirrel hair as a brush.

BUNDI AND KOTA PAINTINGS

The neighbouring princely states of Bundi and Kota produced outstanding miniatures. Bundi specialized in depicting palace life and scenes from Krishna's life, executed in soft blues and greens. Kota is renowned for its superb hunting scenes, set in dramatic forested landscapes, with wonderful depictions of animals and foliage. An 18th-century court painter named Sheikh Tajul created many of them.



Bundi miniature depicting a palace scene



Bani Thani Radha, often called the Indian Mona Lisa

KISHANGARH PAINTINGS

Famous for his fine portraits, the 18th-century Kishangarh artist Nihal Chand found a favourite model in the royal courtesan Bani Thani Radha, with her elegantly elongated features and enigmatic expression. He was also known for his lyrical depictions of landscapes and seasons.



Maharao Durjan in the Kota Forest (1730)

Ranthambhore National Park 29



Park sign

This park lies in the shadow of the Aravalli and Vindhya mountain ranges and covers a core area of 275 sq km (106 sq miles). Its razor-sharp ridges, deep boulder-filled gorges, lakes and jungles are the habitat of carnivores such as the caracal, panther, jackal and hyena, numerous species of deer, and a

rich variety of resident and migratory birds. The most famous resident, however, is the endangered tiger, and it is a unique experience to catch glimpses of this majestic animal. Like other parks in the region, this was originally the hunting ground of Jaipur's maharajas and it only became a Project Tiger Reserve in 1973.



Rajbagh Talao

Ruined partitions stand on the banks of Rajbagh Talao, one of the three lakes in the park.

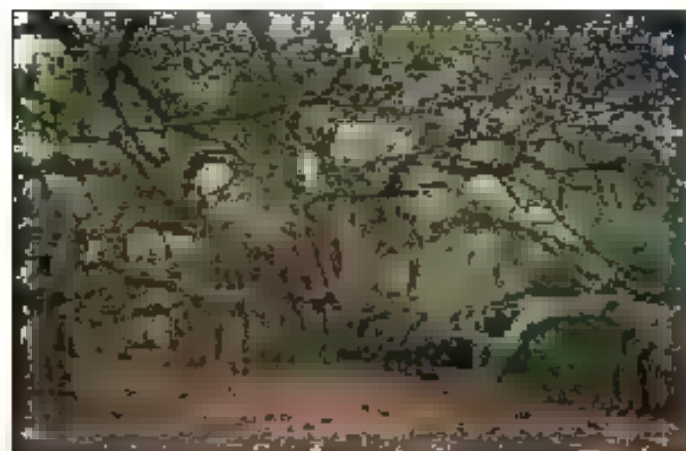
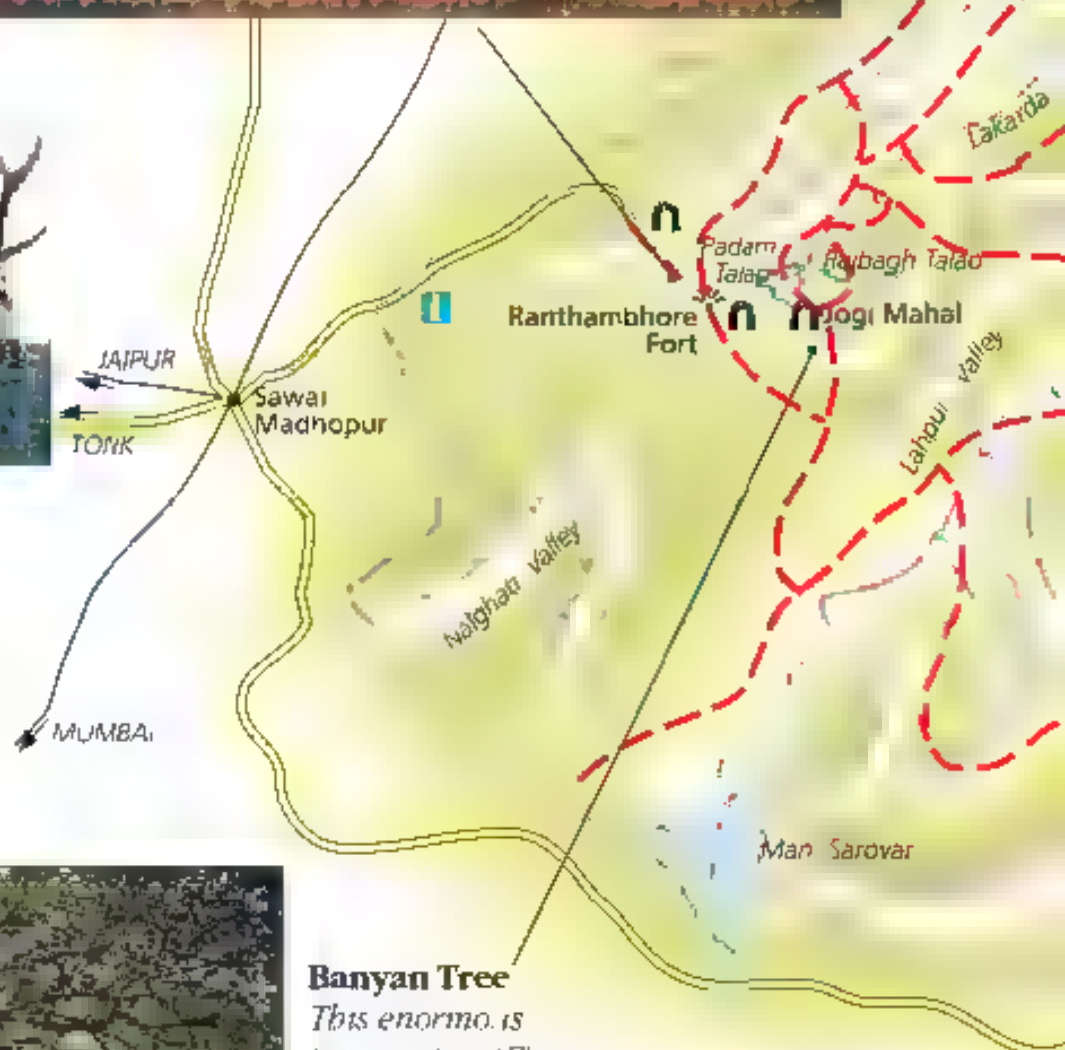
Ranthambhore Fort

The park derives its name from this great Rajput forest fort that is 1,000 years old and stands at a height of 215 m (705 ft).



Sambar

Large herds of sambar (*Cervus unicolor*) are seen around the lakes, wallowing in the water and feeding on aquatic plants, unperturbed by jeeps and visitors.



Banyan Tree

This enormous banyan tree (*Ficus bengalensis*) lies in the grounds of Joggi Mahal. Its many spreading branches are all supported by roots.



Tiger

Sighting the park's main predator is a matter of chance, but one can often find traces of its activities

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Sawai Madhopur district 180 km (112 miles) SE of Jaipur Sawai Madhopur, 10 km (6 miles) E of entry point, then taxi. Sawai Madhopur. RTDC Hotel Vinayak, Sawai Madhopur, (07 462, 221 333. Oct-Jun. extra charges. compulsory. Walking is strictly prohibited. Only jeeps hired from the Project Tiger Office, (07462 220 223, near the railway station, are allowed inside the park. The Dastkan Kendra, (07462, 222 892, opp Kutalpura village on the way to Kundera

Indian Roller Bird

This is one of the many species of birds found in the park. The others include birds of prey such as the crested serpent eagle and Bonelli's eagle, and many species of pigeons, flycatchers, storks and water birds



KEY

- Major road
- Railway
- Park border
- viewpoint
- Trails
- Archaeological site
- Tourist information



Marsh Crocodile

Muggers, or marsh crocodiles, are commonly seen submerged in water or basking on the shores of the lakes. Ungulate species are their main prey, and sometimes a crocodile can be glimpsed dragging the carcass of a deer into the water. Monitor lizards and pythons are some of the other reptiles found in the park.



Sloth Bear

This shaggy bear with short hind legs and a long muzzle emerges at dusk to feed. During the day it shelters in the rocky outcrops and is difficult to sight.



GUJARAT

The state of Gujarat has three distinct regions—a corridor running north to south which is the industrial mainland, a peninsula known as Saurashtra, and Kutch, which is partly desert and partly marshland. The state's 1 600 km (994 mile) coastline has attracted seafarers through the ages, lured by the rich prospects of trade. The Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, Mughals and British, as well as Parsis fleeing their native Iran, have all left their mark on

Gujarat's culture. Fascinating archaeological sites, superb Jain, Hindu and Islamic architecture, exquisite crafts and rare wildlife including the Asiatic lion are among Gujarat's attractions, as are its hardworking, enterprising people. In January 2001 an earthquake hit Gujarat and devastated the region of Kutch. But with their legendary capacity to overcome hardship and disaster the people lost no time in rebuilding their lives out of the debris around them.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- 1 Ahmedabad
- 16 Bhavnagar
- 22 Bhuj
- 11 Daman
- 14 Diu
- 10 Jamnagar
- 7 Junagadh
- 13 Manehr
- 5 Patan
- 18 Porbandar
- 21 Rajkot

Siddhipur

- 17 Surat
- 8 Vadodara

Historic Sites

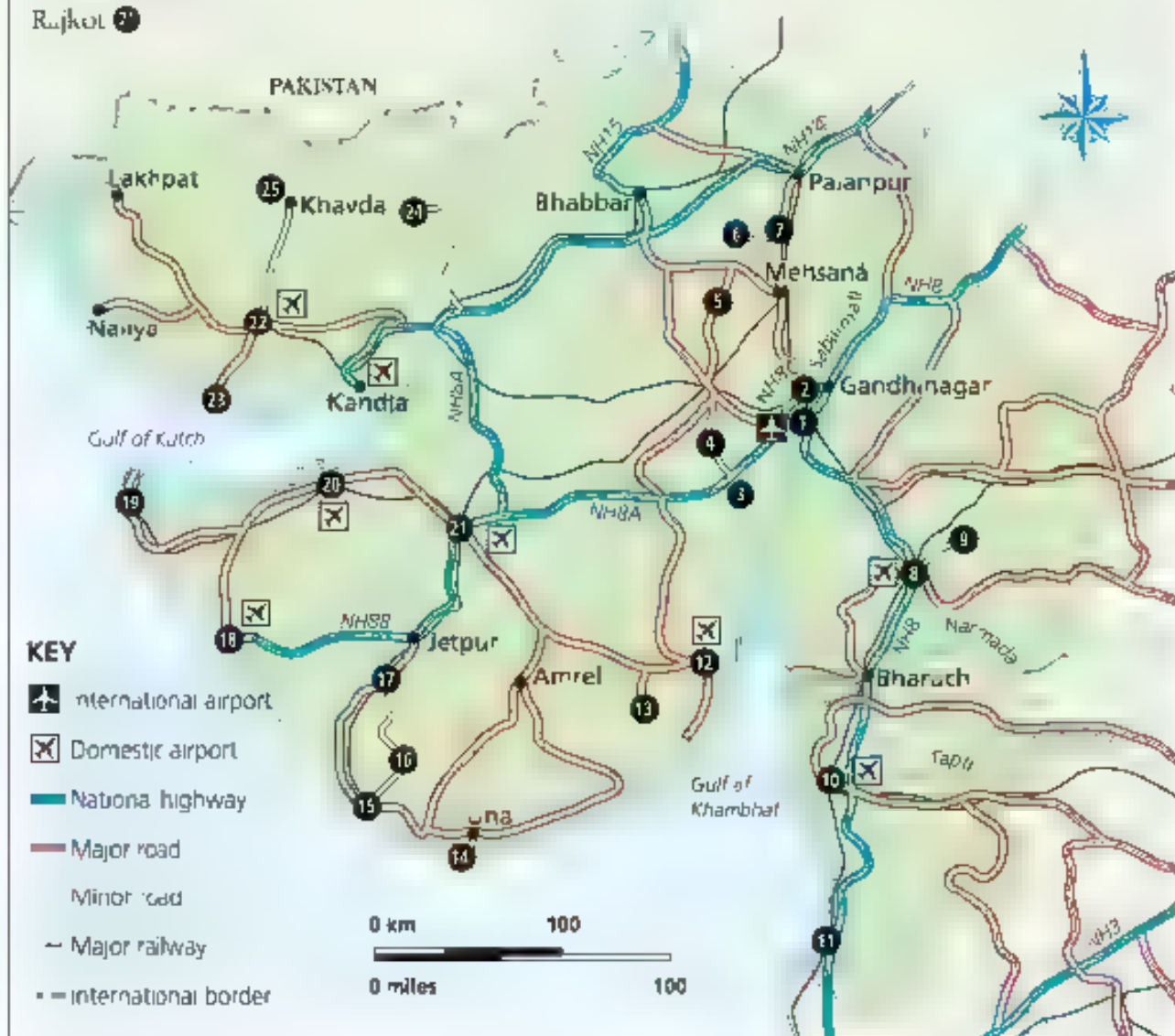
- 2 Adaraj Vav
- 9 Champaner
- 24 Dholavira
- 3 Lotha
- 3 Modhera Sun Temple

Temples & Holy Places

- 19 Dwarka
- 13 Palitana
- 15 Somnath

National Parks & Areas of Natural Beauty

- The Little Rann of Kutch Sanctuary 12
- Nal Sarovar Sanctuary 3
- Sasan Gir National Park 16



Ahmedabad

Gujarat's leading city Ahmedabad was the state capital until 1970. This bustling industrial and commercial centre also has a fascinating old quarter, redolent with Gujarat's traditional culture and history. Legend has it that the city owes its foundation to Sultan Ahmed Shah (r 1411–42), who, while out hunting, encountered a warren of rabbits on the banks of the Sabarmati river. Astonishingly, the rabbits turned fiercely on his hounds and defended their territory. Viewing this as an auspicious sign, the sultan built his new capital at this site and named it after himself – Ahmedabad.



A view of the crowded banks of the Sabarmati river

The Old City

Bounded by Lady Vidyagauri Rd, Sardar Patel Rd & Kasturba Gandhi Rd.
Heritage Walking Tours Tel (079, 2657 4335.

A maze of crowded bazaars, *pols* (large gateways, leading to residential quarters), exquisitely carved façades, temples, mosques and subterranean stepwells (*uavs*) mark the 3-km (2-mile) square that makes up the Old City. This area is best explored on foot, and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation organizes a daily Heritage Walking Tour through the atmospheric bylanes.

Built at the site of the original city, **Bhadra Fort** has panoramic views of the surrounding streets. Southwest of the fort is **Ahmed Shah's Mosque**, a simple place of worship, built in 1414 on the site of an early 13th-century Hindu temple.

Perhaps Ahmedabad's most photographed monument, **Siddi Saiyad's Mosque** in the northeast corner of Bhadra Fort is renowned for its superb yellow stone latticework. Made by a slave of Ahmed Shah in 1572, the

twin *jalis* on the western wall depict the intertwining branches of a tree, carved with extraordinary delicacy.

Southeast of the fort, the **Teen Darwaza** ("Triple Gateway") straddles the road which is lined with shops selling block-prints, silverware and assorted bric-a-brac. Close by along Mahatma Gandhi Road is the **Jami Masjid**, which Sultan Ahmed Shah built in 1423, to enable the faithful to

congregate for Friday prayers. The masons who constructed this yellow sandstone structure, ingeniously used pieces retrieved from demolished Hindu and Jain temples – the black slab close to the main arch is said to be the base of an inverted Jain idol. The mosque's 15 domes are supported by 260 pillars covered with intricate carvings. The interior is illuminated by natural light filtered through latticework screens.

Outside the east entrance of the Jami Masjid, close to the jewellery bazaar in Manek Chowk, is the **Tomb of Ahmed Shah**, with elegant pillared verandahs, where the sultan, his son and grandson are buried. In the heart of the market, echoing the plan and layout of the sultan's tomb, lies **Rani-ka-Hazira**, the mausoleum of his many queens.

To the southeast of Manek Chowk is **Rani Sipri's Mosque**, also known as Masjid-e-Nagina ("Jewel of a Mosque") because of its elegant proportions and slender minarets. Northwest of Manek Chowk is **Rani Rupmati's Mosque**.

Dedicated to the sultan's Hindu wife, Built in the mid-15th century, the mosque incorporates elements of Hindu and Islamic design, with perforated stone screens to provide privacy for women.

The city's famous **Slaking Minarets**, which are located next to the railway station, are closed to visitors.



Tree of Life jali in Siddi Saiyad's Mosque



Traffic moving through the Teen Darwaza thoroughfare

Outside the Old City

N of the Old City
Situating outside the Delhi Gate the **Hatheesing Temple** was built in 1850 by Hathesing Kesanising, a Jain merchant. This intricately carved marble temple is dedicated to Dharmanath, the 15th Jain *tirthankara*. A paved courtyard has 52 cubicles, housing shrines dedicated to different *tirthankaras*.

A fine example of Gujarat's *sapwellis* is the **Dada Harir Vav** lying to the northeast of the old city. Built in 1500 for Bai Harir Sultan, a lady from the sultan's harem, its walls and pillars are beautifully decorated with elaborate carvings

New Ahmedabad

W of Sabarmati river
Across the Sabarmati river modern Ahmedabad has some fine examples of contemporary architecture designed by Le Corbusier (see p93), and the American architect, Louis Kahn. The **Sanskar Kendra**, designed by Le Corbusier, has a rare collection of miniature paintings. The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) India's top college for business studies, is on a campus designed by Louis Kahn. Close by the **ID Institute of Indology** houses ancient manuscripts

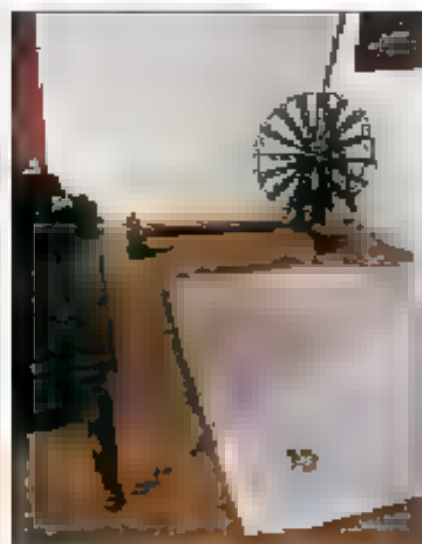
and paintings, and the **Calico Museum** (see pp338-9) displays an outstanding collection of textiles. The prestigious National Institute of Design is on the south bank of the river

Sabarmati Ashram

8.30am-7pm daily

mid-Jun-mid-Oct

A spartan colony of tiled houses, the **Sabarmati Ashram** was a second home to Mahatma Gandhi. It was from here that he orchestrated the final struggle for India's freedom. His cottage, *Hriday Kam*, has been maintained much as he left it and contains some personal items such as his round eyeglasses, wooden slippers, books and letters



Gandhi's room in the Sabarmati Ashram, with his spinning wheel

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Ahmedabad district 545 km (338 miles) NW of Mumbai

3,515,400 10 km (6 miles) N of city centre

HK House, Ashram Rd, (079) 2657 8046 Mon-Sat

Uttarayan (14 Jan), Navratri (Sep/Oct)

Environs

About 4 km (2.5 miles) south of the city is the **Vishala Complex** with a museum displaying traditional utensils. It also has an excellent outdoor restaurant for Gujarati cuisine set in an attractive rural ambience (see p611). A short distance to the southwest is the **Sarkhej Roja**, a beautiful complex of tombs and pavilions around an artificial lake, built as a retreat for Gujarat's rulers between 1445 and 1461. Its tombs include that of Ahmed Shah's spiritual advisor, Sheikh Ahmed Khattu. Finely carved brass latticework is a unique feature of this site. Built in the late 1960s, the state capital, **Gandhinagar** is 25 km (16 miles) north of Ahmedabad. Spread over 60 sq km (23 sq miles) this planned township has the state's administrative complex at its centre.

AHMEDABAD OLD CITY CENTRE

Ahmed Shah's Mosque ②

Bhadra Fort ①

Jami Masjid ⑤

Rani-ka-Hazira ⑦

Rani Rupmati's

Mosque ⑨

Rani Sipri's Mosque ⑧

Siddi Saiyad's Mosque ③

Teen Darwaza ④

Tomb of Ahmed Shah ⑥



Key to Symbols see back flap



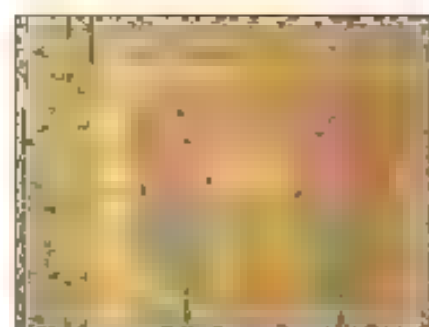
Ahmedabad: The Calico Museum



Detail from
kalamkari fabric

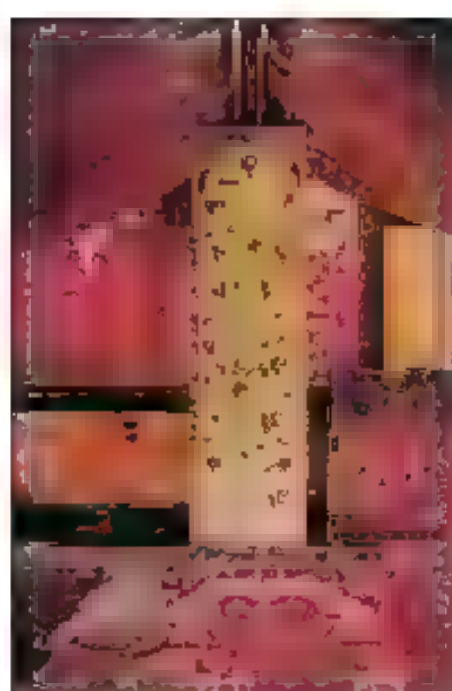
A major centre of India's textile trade and industry since the 15th century, Ahmedabad is an appropriate location for this outstanding museum. Its collection of rare textiles includes royal tents, carpets and costumes, religious paintings on cloth, embroideries, brocades and silk weaves and Kashmir shawls.

The exhibits, most of which date to the 17th and 18th centuries, are displayed in a beautiful old *haveli*. The museum was established in 1949 by the Sarabhai family, textile mill owners and leading philanthropists of Gujarat.



Brocade Patka

This 18th-century gold brocade waist band patterned with pink poppies, was part of a royal costume.



★ Mughal Tent

This sumptuous 17th-century tent is made up of intricately band-painted cotton panels in the kalamkari technique (see p680). Mughal kings used these tents during military campaigns, on hunting expeditions and while touring their kingdom.

Ground floor



★ Sharad Utsav Pichhwai

Lord Krishna plays the flute in this exquisite 18th-century pichhwai from Nathdwara (see p399). It was hung in the temple on the autumn full moon, when nectar is believed to fall from heaven. Note the delightful cow licking Krishna's leg.

GALLERY GUIDE

The museum, set in the verdant Shahi Bagh gardens, is spread over 12 rooms on two floors of the haveli. The exhibits are displayed with great imagination, and each gallery presents the craft of a region, a tribal group or a religious sect. Within the museum compound, housed in another fine haveli, are the Sarabhai Foundation Galleries, with a fine collection of bronze icons and paintings.



A view of the Calico Museum, showing the richly carved wooden façade of the old haveli in which it is housed

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Sarabhai Foundation, Shahi Bagh, N of Delhi Gate

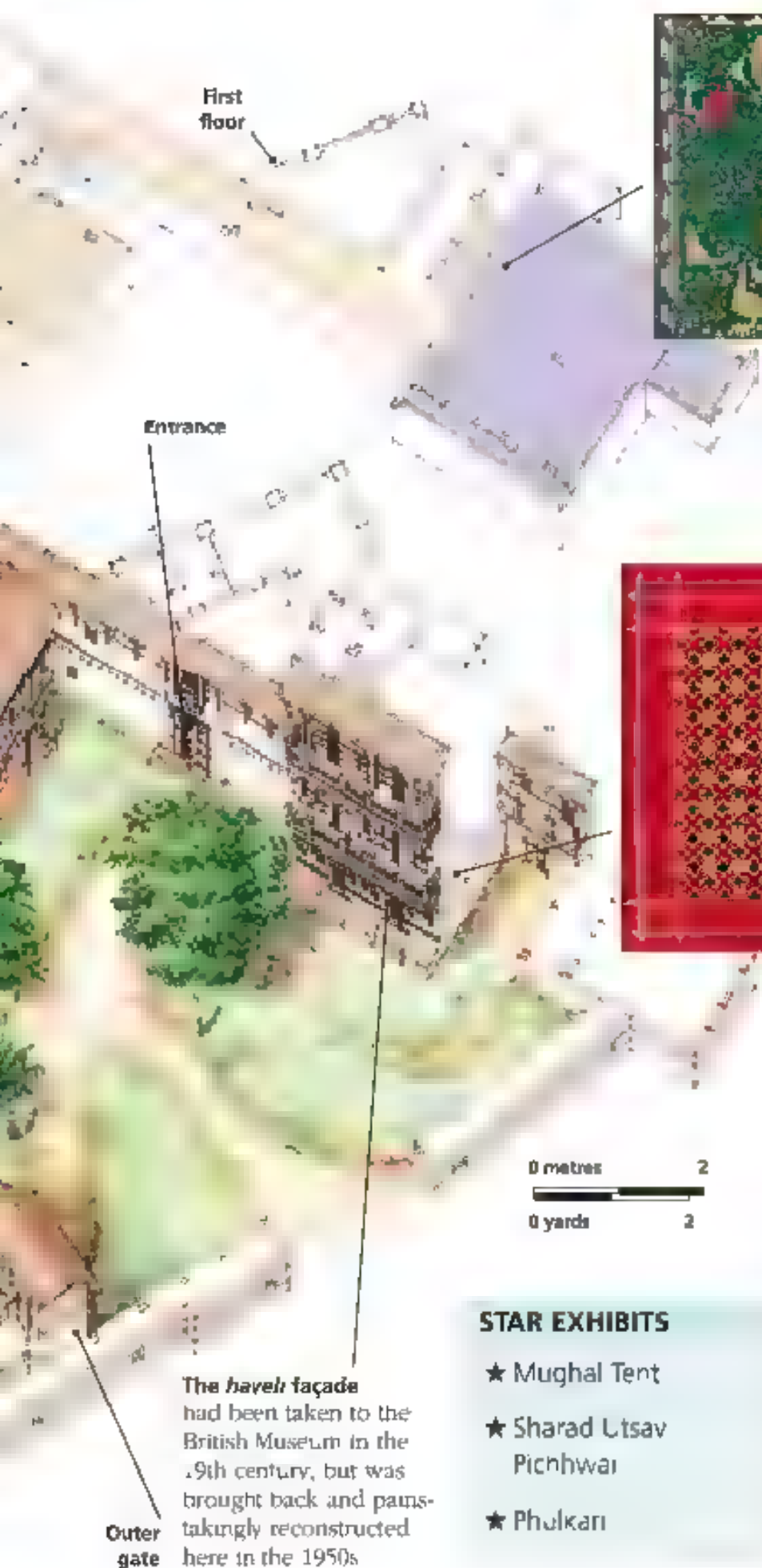
Tel (079) 2286 8172

☐ Thu–Tue. ☑ public hols.

☑ 10am–12:30pm, 2:30–5:30pm. Garden tour by appointment only ☑ ☑

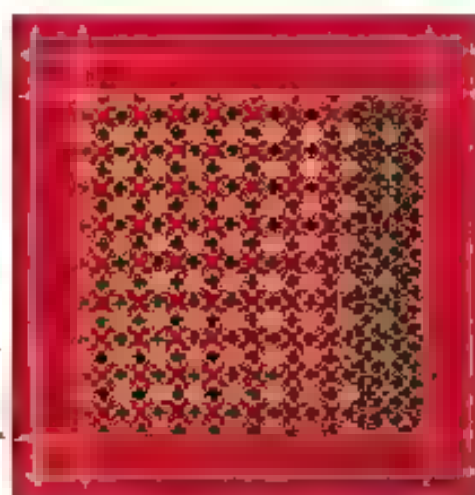
Sarabhai Foundation Galleries

☐ Thu–Tue. ☑ public hols.



★ Phulkari

Elaborately embroidered with cotton thread and floss silk, this 19th-century piece from Punjab was part of a bride's dowry



Telia Rumal

This cotton kerchief from Andhra Pradesh is made by a unique technique, where the yarn is oiled before being dyed and woven

KEY

- ☐ Export textile galleries
- ☐ Court textiles
- ☐ Gallery of shawls
- ☑ Mughal costumes
- ☐ Jain and Vaishnav textiles
- ☑ Kutch and Sindh embroidery
- ☐ Kathiawar embroidery
- ☐ Textiles of Orissa
- ☐ Madhubani quilts
- ☐ Phulkari from Punjab, Kantha from Bengal
- ☐ Tie-and-dye gallery

STAR EXHIBITS

- ★ Mughal Tent
- ★ Sharad Utsav Pichhwai
- ★ Phulkari

The haveli façade had been taken to the British Museum in the 19th century, but was brought back and painstakingly reconstructed here in the 1950s

Outer gate

Adalaj Vav 2



Detail of carving
on a wall niche

The stepwells (*vavs*) of Gujarat are an ingenious answer to the water scarcity in this arid region. Many of these elaborately ornamented, underground wells are dedicated to deities, acknowledging the hand of God in providing life-sustaining water. Adalaj Vav, perhaps Gujarat's finest stepwell, was built in 1499 by Rudabai, the wife of a local chieftain, to conserve water and provide a cool,

and pleasant ambience for social interaction. A series of beautiful platforms and galleries are built into the sides of the stepwell, all the way down to its subterranean depths.



Local women at the stepwell, which is still used for rest and recreation



The Stepped Corridor

The main corridor leads down five storeys to a depth of 30 m (98 ft), through pavilions whose walls, pillars and niches are covered with sculptures.

★ The First Well

Adalaj has an intermediate tank, 7 m (23 ft) in diameter just before the main well. The octagonal well shaft is entirely covered with fine carvings.

Ramp for
drawing water

Stringed
courses

The main well
is no longer in use,
but the ramp at the
top, used for draw-
ing water, still exists.

The steps sur-
rounding the first
well were used
by people taking
ritual baths.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ The First Well
- ★ The First Landing
- ★ Wall Niches



Ornamental Detail

The well shafts are profusely carved with intricate floral and geometric motifs, interspersed with figurines

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Gandhinagar district, 17 km (11 miles) N of Ahmedabad. 🚗 Taxes and autos are the best options from Ahmedabad ☑ daily 📷 flash photography is prohibited

One of the three main entrances



★ The First Landing

Balconies, windows, doors and shrines line the first landing - a large underground platform. Adalaj is best viewed at noon, when sunlight filters down to the bottom.

Stringed courses, or horizontal detailing, break the monotony of plain walls.



The Pavilions

The pavilions, supported by rows of carved pillars, are flooded with diffused light and provide ideal resting places.

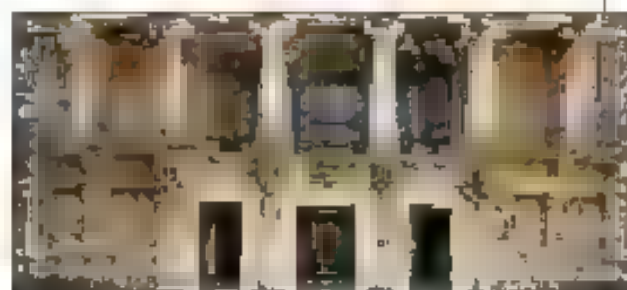


★ Wall Niches

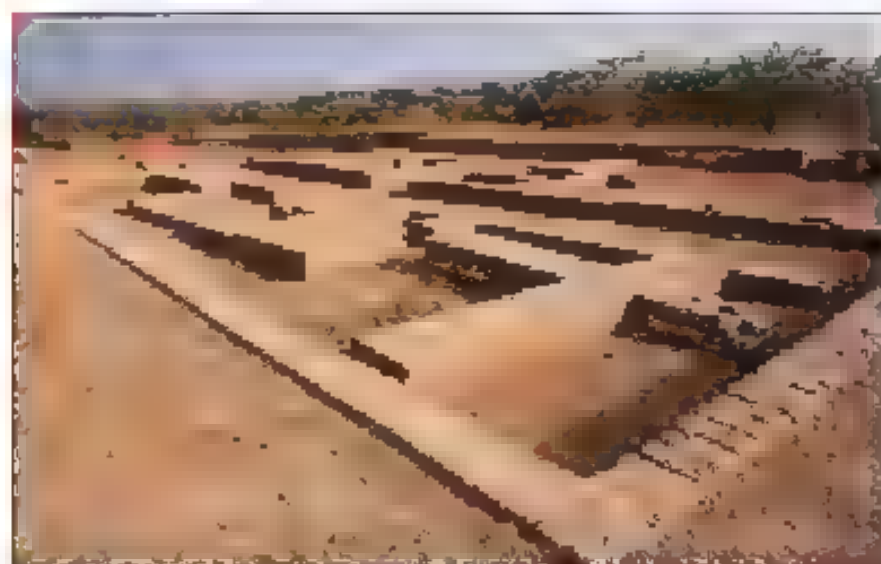
Niches feature in all the pavilions, carved with motifs of pots, horses, flowers and leaves.

OTHER STEPWELLS IN GUJARAT

The 11th-century **Rani ni Vav** in Patan (see p417) is among the most elaborately carved stepwells, with some 800 sculptures. Built in 1499, **Dada Harir Vav** (see p411) in Ahmedabad, is one of the finest examples of a *vav* from the Muslim period in Gujarat. The 15th-century **Ambarpur Vav**, 18 km (11 miles) from Ahmedabad, is one of the few *vavs* still in use.



Rani ni Vav in Patan, one of India's largest vavs



The dry dock at Lothal, dating to 2500 BC

Lothal ③

Ahmedabad district 75 km (47 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. Lothal-Burkhi station, 6 km (4 miles) SW of Lothal, then local transport to Burkhi Sat-Thu

Excavations at Lothal have unearthed the remains of a remarkable city of the Indus Valley Civilization (see p41) that existed 4,500 years ago. Located 6 km (4 miles) northwest of the confluence of the Sabarmati and Bhogavo rivers, Lothal (literally, "Mound of the Dead") had a navigable estuary to the sea through the Gulf of Cambay (now Gulf of Khambat), which made it a flourishing port that once traded with Egypt, Persia and Mesopotamia.

The site reveals the foundations of a well-planned city with blocks of houses, paved drains, channels and wells and 12 public baths. Other finds include beautifully made beads and pottery decorated with bird and animal motifs, seals with intriguing, pictographic writing (as yet undeciphered), and weights and measures were also found here. The city was surrounded by a mud brick embankment to protect it from the perennial floods which, in all probability, caused the city's destruction around 1,900 BC.

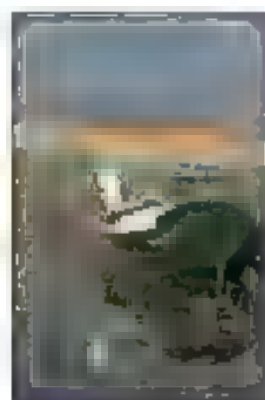
Among the prize exhibits in the **Archaeological Museum** are a copper figurine and a gold-bead necklace.

In 2001, Indian oceanographers carrying out water pollution tests in the Gulf of Cambay nearby, made an

astonishing discovery. They found the foundations of two cities under the sea, complete with streets, houses, staircases and temples. Objects recovered from the seabed, such as a stone slab covered with mysterious markings (which could be the earliest form of writing yet discovered), and carved wooden logs, have been carbon-dated to 7500 BC. The discovery of this site, which has been dubbed "Asia's Atlantis" has excited historians and archaeologists all over the world, as it suggests that civilization may have started 5,000 years earlier than previously believed. They surmise that the city may have been submerged as sea levels rose at the end of the Ice Age in about 8000 BC.

Archaeological Museum

Sat-Thu



Reed beds on Nal Lake

Nal Sarovar Sanctuary ④

Ahmedabad district 60 km (37 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. Viramgam, 35 km (22 miles) N of entry point, then taxi Viramgam Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Gandhinagar (079) 952717-223 500

permit needed from Forest Department to enter sanctuary

Nal Sarovar sanctuary is one of the largest bird sanctuaries in the country. The 115-sq km (44-sq mile) Nal Lake and the surrounding swamp forests are best visited between November and February, when they attract as many as 250 species of waterfowl, including flamingoes, geese, cranes, pelicans, storks, cormorants, ibis and spoonbills. Winter migrants from as far as Siberia, such as the elegant bluish-grey

demisee crane, also congregate here in hundreds, and can be observed at fairly close quarters. A perennial resident is the Sarus crane, the largest species of crane in the world. Believed to pair for life, Sarus cranes enact a spectacular courtship ritual, performing a synchronized dance that

involves bowing with outstretched wings. Unfortunately, pressures on the habitat from the resident fishing communities, and from growing numbers of tourists, are slowly depleting the Nal Lake's rich variety of birdlife.



Graceful flamingoes, a regular sight at the Nal Sarovar Sanctuary



Exquisitely carved images of Hindu deities at Rani ni Vav, Patan

Modhera Sun Temple ❶

See pp418–19.

Patan ❷

Mehsana district 140 km (87 miles) from Ahmedabad. ☎ 112 050

🚗 🚚 🚚 Jatar Fair (Sep/Oct)

The town of Patan was the capital of this region between the 8th and 15th centuries before Sultan Ahmed Shah moved base to Ahmedabad (see pp410–11) in 1411. The ruins of the old capital, Anhilwada, lie 2 km (1.3 miles) northwest of Patan, and include an impressive stepwell, **Rani ni Vav**, and a water tank. The seven-storeyed stepwell ranks with Adalaj Vav (see pp414–15) as the finest in Gujarat. This splendid piece of architecture from the Solanki period (10th–14th centuries), now painstakingly restored, boasts some 800 individual elaborately carved sculptures. Constructed in the 11th century by Queen Udaymati as a memorial to her husband Bhimdeva, its unique feature is its direct as well as lateral series of steps leading to the water's edge. At the base are 37 niches, with the elephant god Ganesha carved into them. Nearby the **Sahastralinga Talav**, a water tank with 1,000 shrines dedicated to the god Shiva, stands on the banks of the Saraswati river.

Patan also boasts more than 100 beautifully carved Jain

temples, of which the **Panchasara Parsvanatha Temple** is the most striking. The town also has numerous traditional *bavelis* with intricately carved façades.

Another attraction for many visitors is the beautiful *patola* sari. This lavish fabric is woven in Patan by a single family who have passed the craft down from one generation to the next. They are available locally and in major cities.

Siddhpur ❸

Mehsana district 128 km (80 miles) N of Ahmedabad. ☎ 53,600 🚗 🚚

Lying along the Anand river, Siddhpur was once famous for the Radra Mala Complex of Shiva temples, dating from the 10th century. It was later destroyed by Muslim invaders in the 13th century. Historical accounts describe a three-storeyed complex, profusely carved in stone and supported

by 1,600 pillars, with 11 smaller shrines and three 40-m (131 ft) tall gateways. Two porches and four columns from the main shrine are all that remain today, together with a well-preserved, carved gateway with two high columns. An exploration of the town reveals interesting wooden *bavelis* and pillared mansions, built by Muslim traders in the 19th century.

Environs

This region has the popular temple towns of **Ambaji**, 88 km (55 miles) north of Siddhpur, and **Bahucharaji**, 35 km (34 miles) southwest of Siddhpur. Both temples are dedicated to the goddess Amba (a reincarnation of Shiva's consort, Parvati) and they attract large crowds of devotees during the four main full-moon festivals each year in March, June, September and November. The pilgrims have their heads shaved *en masse* at both temples.



Traditional houses in Siddhpur with finely carved façades

PATOLA WEAVING



Detail of a typical *patola* sari

Patola is an intricate silk weaving technique practised in Patan. The warp and weft threads are coloured in parts by tie-dyeing, and then woven to form clear designs in a method called double ikat (see p668). Typical motifs include jewels, flowers, animals and dancing women interspersed with geometric forms. The craft is laborious – a month's work goes into weaving one sari length (5.5 m/6 yards) – and its product is highly prized, especially in a bridal trousseau. This exquisite fabric was exported to Indonesia where it became the cloth of the royal court.

Modhera Sun Temple ⑤



Surya, the Sun God

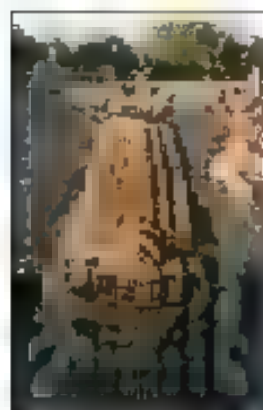
The Sun Temple at Modhera was built in 1026 by King Bhama I of the Solanki dynasty. It is so precisely laid out in an east-west direction that the sun's rays course through its chambers and strike the centre of the inner sanctum at high noon every day. The carvings, both inside and on the exterior, are extraordinarily detailed, depicting a pantheon of Hindu

deities as well as scenes from everyday life. An impressive tank dominates the forecourt. The juxtaposition of a tank with a Sun Temple is inspired by Vedic scriptures, which say that the sun was born from the depths of a primordial ocean.



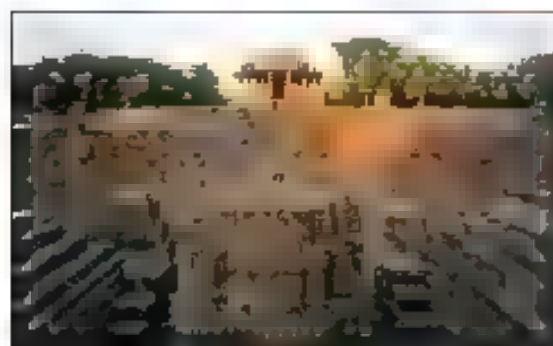
The Entrance Hall

This hall has 12 representations of Surya that depict the phases of the sun in each month of the year.



Shrines

The tank is surrounded by miniature shrines topped by curved shikharas.



The Kund

Flights of stairs create a ripple effect down to the base of the tank (kund) which is shaped like an inverted pyramid.

Vadodara ⑥

Vadodara district, 1–3 km (70 miles) SE of Ahmedabad 𑀘 1 306 100
 ✕ 8 km (5 miles) NE of town centre
 𑀘 𑀘 𑀘 Gujarat Tourism, (0265) 242 7489 𑀘 Vadodara Municipal Corporation, (0265) 243 3116

Situated on the banks of the Vishwamitri river, Vadodara owes much of its splendour to Sayajirao Gaekwad III (1875–1939), a former ruler who transformed his principality into a progressive centre of culture, education and industry. Today Vadodara, also known as Baroda, is a vibrant city with many interesting

buildings, museums and parks. The **Laxmi Vilas Palace**, an Indo-Saracenic pile, was designed by the English architect Major Charles Mant (see p468). It took 12 years to build and was finally comple-

ted in 1890. It is still the residence of the erstwhile ruling family, though there are plans to convert parts of it into a luxury hotel. The **Maharaja Fateh Singh Museum** within the palace grounds has a rare



The magnificent façade of the Laxmi Vilas Palace

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp705–6 and p733



The Torana

All that survives of the torana or arched gateway are these two intricately carved columns leading into the temple

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Mehsana district 119 km (74 miles) NW of Ahmedabad. Mehsana, 25 km (16 miles) away then taxi or bus. (02734, 28 4334 daily Modhera Dance Festival (Jan,



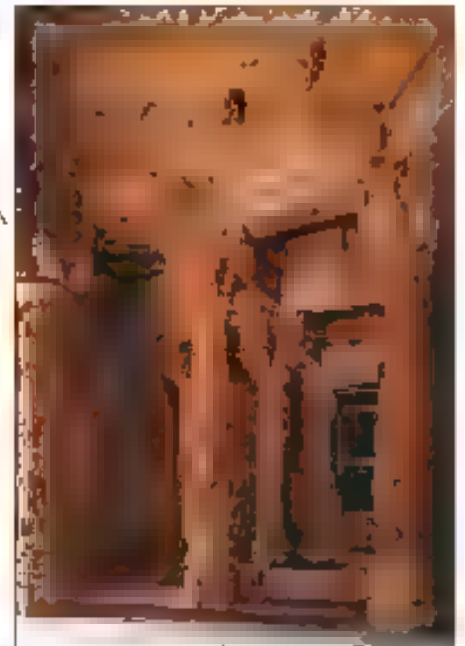
Garbhagriha

The walls and pillars of the inner sanctum are richly carved with images of deities, in strict order of their celestial hierarchy

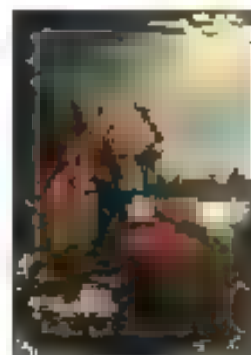
Sabha Mandapa, the assembly hall, was reserved for religious discourses and socio-cultural ceremonies

Nritya Mandapa

This hall, which leads from the assembly hall towards the inner sanctum, was used for dance performances



collection of paintings by the famous Indian artist, Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906) **Sayaji Bagh**, a beautiful park in the heart of the city houses a zoo, a planetarium and the **Vadodara Museum and Picture Gallery** which exhibits an eclectic collection of Mughal miniatures, European oil paintings and royal artifacts. Pride of place goes to its collection of 68 striking bronzes from Akota, a centre of Jain culture in the 5th century. Other notable sights



Radha and Madhava
by Raja Ravi Varma

are the **Kirti Mandir**, the *samadh* (memorial) of Vadodara's royal family, and the **Nyaya Mandir**, an Indo-Saracenic building which is now a law court. The city also has the Maharaja Sayajirao University's **College of Fine Art**, an institute of national eminence

Laxmi Vilas Palace
Tel (0265) 243 1819 Tue–Sun
Visits by prior appointment only

Maharaja Fateh Singh Museum
Tel (0265) 242 6372 Tue–Sun

Vadodara Museum and Picture Gallery

Tel (0265) 279 3801 10:30am–5:30pm Tue–Sun

Environs

The famous **Amul Dairy** is located in **Anand**, 38 km (24 miles) northwest of Vadodara. Synonymous with the “White Revolution” that made India self-sufficient in milk, it helped pioneer India's dairy cooperative movement, and now procures one million litres of milk every day from 1,000 milk cooperative societies. It is open daily to visitors from 3 to 5pm.



Jain Temple in Pavagadh Fort, near Champaner

Champaner ①

Vadodara district 52 km (32 miles) NE of Vadodara Mahakali Festival (Mar/Apr)

The deserted city of Champaner, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is situated at the foot of Pavagadh Hill. Originally the seat of a Rajput Chauhan dynasty, Champaner was conquered by the Muslim ruler Mahmud Begada in 1484. He spent 23 years rebuilding the citadel, adding mosques, palaces and tombs within its massive walls, guarded by huge gateways. Champaner remained the capital of Gujarat until 1535, when it was conquered by the Mughal emperor Humayun. Thereafter, it fell into gradual decline.

Much of Champaner lies in ruins today, with the remains of many old mosques and palaces reflecting a blend of Islamic and Jain traditions. The **Jami Masjid**, built in 1523, is a large, symmetrical structure with a perfectly proportioned dome. Its richly ornamented exterior with 172 pillars and 30-m (98-ft) high minarets, makes it one of the finest Islamic monuments in western India. Another elegant mosque here is the 16th-century **Nagina Masjid**.

The **Pavagadh Fort**, at the crest of the 820-m (2,690-ft) high Pavagadh Hill, is 4 km (2.5 miles) to the southwest of Champaner. It has a cluster of Muslim, Hindu and Jain shrines, and the ruins of an ancient fortification, reflecting

its chequered past. On the way up the hill are the ruins of the **Sat Mahal**, the seven-storeyed palace of the Chauhan kings. The kings were slain when they refused to embrace Islam after the Muslim conquest, and their women and children committed *jauhar*. There are also two domed granaries, the **Makar Kothar** and the **Nadakhia Kothar**.

Environ

Dabhoi Fort, 75 km (47 miles) south of Champaner, was constructed in the 13th century by the Solanki Rajputs (10th–14th centuries).

It is an interesting example of Rajput military architecture, with four gates, a water tank fed by an aqueduct and fields within the fort to provide food during a siege.



Detail from the Jami Masjid



Ruins of the 16th-century Jami Masjid in Champaner

Surat ⑩

Surat district 234 km (145 miles) S of Ahmedabad 2,433,800

1/847 Athugar St, Nanpura, 392001, 247 8586 Mon–Sat

Strategically located on the coast, Surat was once a prosperous port and many powers battled to control it between the 16th and 18th centuries. At various times the Portuguese, Dutch, Mughals, Marathas and British held sway here, but its importance began to wane after 1837, when it was ravaged by flood and fire. Many of Surat's Hindu and Parsi merchants (see p447) left for Bombay (Mumbai), which then gradually overtook Surat as the premier port on the western coast. Though no longer a port of any consequence, Surat is today a major industrial centre. The 16th-century **Surat Castle**

beside the Tapti Bridge, is the town's oldest structure. Built by Khudawan Khan, an Armenian Christian who embraced Islam, the castle has 12-m (39-ft) high battlements and 4-m (13-ft) thick walls. Iron strips were used to bind its various elements and all its joints were filled with molten lead, to make it as impenetrable as

possible. Especially noteworthy is the imposing gateway in its eastern wing, with a menacingly spiked exterior and a delicately carved interior. Sadly, sundry offices now housed within the castle have robbed it of its historic ambience.

Northeast of the castle, just beyond Kataragama Gate, are the English, Dutch and Armenian cemeteries, that bear witness to the city's cosmopolitan past. Though now overgrown, they are worth exploring for the intriguing persona, histories recounted on the tombs and epitaphs. Particularly impressive is the mausoleum of Sir George Oxinden, a governor of the Surat Port, and his brother, in the British cemetery. The tomb of Baron

Adriaan van Reede built in the 17th century, in the Dutch cemetery has an enormous double cupola.

Modern Surat is known for its flourishing textile industry which produces the famous *tanchoi* (brocade) sari. It also specializes in jewellery and is a major diamond-cutting centre for suppliers from all over the world. During the 1980s, the city had unfortunately become a byword for urban squalor, and in 1994 suffered an outbreak of plague. This galvanized the city's administration into a massive clean-up drive which has resulted in the revival of Surat as a prosperous commercial centre.

Daman 15

Daman Union Territory 390 km (242 miles) S of Ahmedabad. 35,750. Vapi, 10 km (6 miles) SE of Daman, then taxi or bus. Nani Daman, (0260, 225 5104).

Tucked away in the southern tip of Gujarat, adjoining Maharashtra, is the tiny enclave of Daman which was a Portuguese colony until 1961. The Damanganga river which flows into the Arabian Sea, divides the town into two distinct parts – Nani Daman (Little Daman) which is dotted with hotels and bars, and Moti Daman (Big Daman), the old Portuguese township.

Moti Daman is enclosed within the massive **Daman Fort**. Its ten bastions and two gateways date to 1559, and it is ringed by a moat linked to the river. Daman's well preserved churches include the large **Bom Jesus Cathedral**



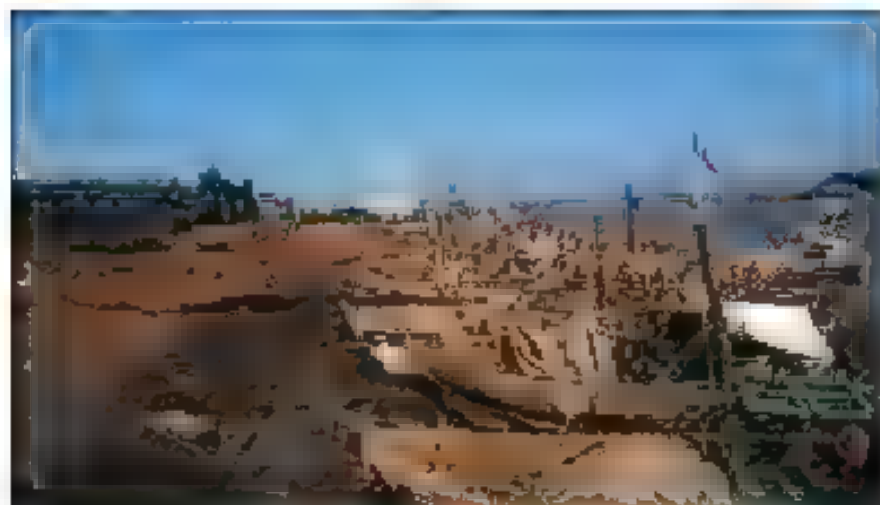
The gateway to St. Jerome's Fort in Nani Daman

built in 1603, which has a richly carved portal and an ornamental altar. The smaller **Rosario Chapel**, outside the fort walls, has exquisitely carved wooden panels, depicting scenes from the life of Jesus. The lighthouse, to the north of the fort, affords fine views of the Gulf of Cambay.

St. Jerome's Fort, in Nani Daman, is less grand than Daman Fort but houses the lovely chapel of Our Lady of the Sea. The chapel has a delicate, classical façade of 12 columns crowned with a cross.

Liquor flows freely in Nani Daman's dingy bars, attracting crowds of tipplers from the rest of Gujarat where alcohol is prohibited. Those who want to take in local colour would be well advised to avoid the bars and explore the farmers' market or the riverside fish market instead.

The Devka and Jampore beaches, 5 km (3 miles) north and south of Daman respectively, are not spectacular but offer tranquil retreats among casuarina groves.



View of the harbour below St. Jerome's fort in Nani Daman, Daman

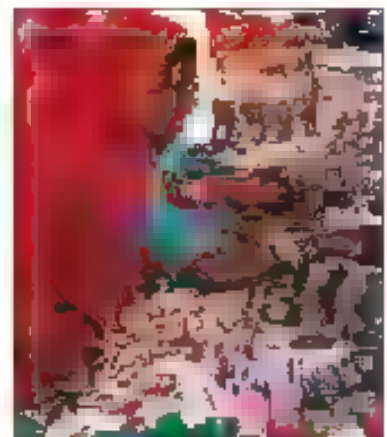
FESTIVALS OF GUJARAT

Uttarayan (14 Jan)

Coinciding with Makar Sankranti which marks the height of winter, this colourful festival fills the sky all over Gujarat with thousands of beautifully crafted kites.

Modhera Dance Festival (Jan)

Modhera Sun Temple. This three-day festival of Indian classical dance is a unique opportunity to enjoy these dance forms in the setting in which they were originally performed.



Bangles on sale at Tarnetar Fair

Tarnetar Fair (1st-6th Sep)

Tarnetar. This unique matchmaking *mela* sees prospective grooms promenading the fairgrounds, holding colourful umbrellas, as young women wearing multi-pleated skirts swirl around in dance. A girl indicates her preference by approaching a youth for a chat, leaving it to the elders to settle matrimonial details.

Navratri (Sep/Oct)

Navratri or "nine nights" is celebrated throughout Gujarat and is marked by nine nights of dancing in honour of the mother goddess. Women perform the *garba* dance, whirling around in a circle, clapping their hands. The exhilarating *dandia ras* is the highlight, when men and women strike small lacquered batons to a beat that gets faster and faster till it finally breaks in a frenzied crescendo.

Bhavnagar 12

Bhavnagar district 200 km (124 miles) SW of Ahmedabad 571 000. 8 km (5 miles) SE of city centre

For most visitors, Bhavnagar is little more than a convenient base for exploring the magnificent temple town of **Pantana**. Yet Bhavnagar itself is not without charm – its old bazaar, dotted with merchants' *havelis*, has shops specializing in tie-dye textiles and gold and silver jewellery. In the southeast corner of the city on the road to the airport, is the semi-circular **Barton Museum** (built in 1895). It houses the private collection of coins, weapons and *objets d'art* of a British officer, Colonel Barton, who served here in the 19th century.

The **Nilambagh Palace**, once the former rulers' residence, was built in 1859 and is now a luxury hotel (see p 706) with a great banquet hall and peacocks in the garden.

Barton Museum

Tel (0278) 242 45 6.
 10am–6.30pm Mon–Sat
 public hols.

Nilambagh Palace

Ahmedabad Rd. Tel (0278) 242 4241

Enviroms

The flat grasslands of the 36 sq-km (14 sq-mile) **Velavadar National Park** (65 km, 40 miles north of Bhavnagar) are home to over 1,000 blackbucks. Blackbucks were protected by the Bishnoi community (see p 385) until the state took over this role. A walk through the

park at dusk provides a glimpse of the wolves that hunt this Indian antelope, and of the naga that congregate at the park's watering holes.

Velavadar National Park

Forest Dept, Bhavnagar, (0278) 288 0222 mid-Oct–May. extra charges

Palitana 13

Bhavnagar district 52 km (32 miles) SW of Bhavnagar (02848) 25 2327
 Falgun Surti Tera (Feb/Mar)

An extraordinary cluster of 1008 Jain temples crowns the twin summits of Palitana's Shatrunjaya Hill and covers the saddle linking them. The first



Detail from the door of a temple in Palitana

Jain *tirthankara*, Adinath (see p 396), is said to have visited this hill, while his chief disciple, Pundanka, is believed to have attained enlightenment here. Most of the temples date to the 16th century – earlier temples on this site were destroyed by Muslim invaders in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The temples are grouped into nine fortified clusters called *tulas*, and named after the wealthy devotees who paid for their construction. Each *tula* has a main shrine surrounded by several smaller ones. The most impressive of the main shrines is the 17th-century **Adinath Temple**, on the hill's northern ridge. Its ceilings, walls and supporting brackets are covered with carvings of saints, dancers, musicians and lotus blossoms. Many images of Adinath are enshrined



Sculptures of Jain *tirthankaras* along a temple corridor, Palitana

inside. The southern ridge is dominated by the 16th-century **Adishvara Temple**, with its richly ornamented spire. The main image within portrays Rishabhdev. It has eyes made of crystal and is adorned with necklaces and a magnificent gold crown.

The 4-km (2.5-mile) ascent to the summit of the hill takes about two hours, a task made lighter by the spectacular silhouette of hundreds of temple spires and domes against the sky. From the top, there is a panoramic view of the Gulf of Cambay and the countryside.

Diu 14

Diu Union Territory 418 km (260 miles) S of Ahmedabad. 21,600
 Delwada, 8 km (5 miles) N of town centre Diu Jetty (02875) 225 2653

The little island of Diu covers an area of just 39 sq km (15 sq miles). Once known as the 'Gibraltar of the East' it was



The 19th-century Nilambagh Palace in Bhavnagar, set in a huge garden

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp 705–6 and p 733



The abandoned seaside fort at Diu, dating to the 16th century

a flourishing Portuguese colony from the 16th century onwards. It was ceded to India in 1961 and is today a Union Territory administered by the Central Government. The majestic **Diu Fort** on the eastern end of the island dominates the town. Built in 1535 when the Portuguese took control of Diu, it is worth a visit for its impressive double moat, its old cannons and for the superb views of the sunset it offers.

Diu town, sandwiched between the fort to the east and the city wall to the west, retains a distinctly Portuguese atmosphere in its churches and its many mansions. The **Nagar Seth Haveli** is particularly outstanding, with carved balconies and stone lions. The **Church of St Paul** (built in 1610) has a lovely, carved wooden altar, statues of the saints and a sonorous organ. Its impressive Gothic facade was rebuilt in 1807. Nearby, the **St Thomas Church** (built in 1598) houses a museum of religious artifacts and stone inscriptions linked to the island's history.

The beach at **Nagoa**, 7 km (4 miles) from the town, has a long stretch of sand fringed with palm trees. Other beaches within easy reach of Diu are Jallandhar and Chakratirth, which has a sunset viewpoint. As a Union Territory, Diu is not subject to Gujarat's prohibition laws. This explains the profusion of bars in the town, and the invasion, on weekends, by thirsty Gujaratis.

Somnath 15

Junagadh district 406 km (252 miles) SW of Ahmedabad.

Situated on the coast with a commanding view of the Arabian Sea, the **Somnath Temple** is revered as one of the 12 most sacred sites dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple's legendary wealth made it the target of successive plundering armies, beginning with Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026, who is said to have made off with camel-loads of gold and precious gems, leaving the edifice in ruins. The cycle of pilage

and reconstruction at Somnath continued over the next seven centuries. The present temple, made of stone, was built in 1950.

East of the temple, at the confluence of three rivers is **Triveni Tirth**. The ghats going down to the sea at this spot are said to mark the place where Lord Krishna's funeral rites were performed, after a hunter mistook him for a deer and killed him.

Sasan Gir National Park 16

Junagadh district 368 km (229 miles)

SW of Ahmedabad. **Entry point:**

Sasan Gir For permits

contact Field Director, Sinh Sadan,

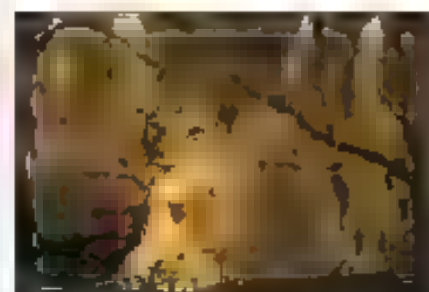
Sasan Gir (02877) 28 5541 mid-

Oct-mid-Jun. extra charges

Jeeps available

Until a century ago, the Asiatic lion roamed vast areas of India, from Gujarat all the way to Bihar in the east. Now, the Sasan Gir National Park is the only habitat left of the lion outside Africa. Asiatic lions are smaller than African lions, with a fold of skin along the belly. The males have shorter manes. About 320 lions live in Gir's 259 sq km (100 sq miles) of dry scrub forest. By the early 1900s, the Asiatic lion had been hunted and poached almost to the point of extinction. Their remarkable resurgence in Gir is attributed to the conservation efforts of the erstwhile nawab of Junagadh (see p426) and, subsequently, the Gujarat government.

A number of rivers wind through Gir, making it a haven for a range of wildlife, including the caracal, the *chausingha* (four-horned antelope), the blackbuck and a substantial leopard population.



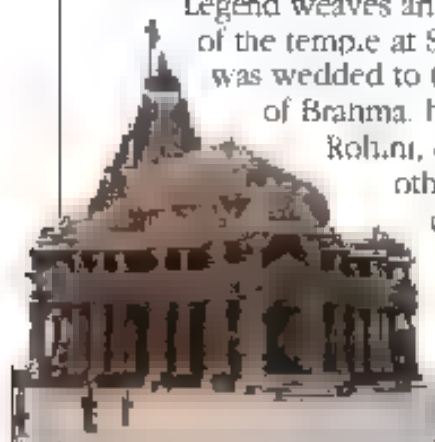
An Asiatic lioness basking in the sun in Sasan Gir Sanctuary

THE MOON GOD AND SOMNATH

Legend weaves an interesting tale around the origins of the temple at Somnath. Som, the Moon God, was wedded to the 27 daughters of Daksha, a son of Brahma, but he loved only one of them.

Rohini, causing great frustration to the

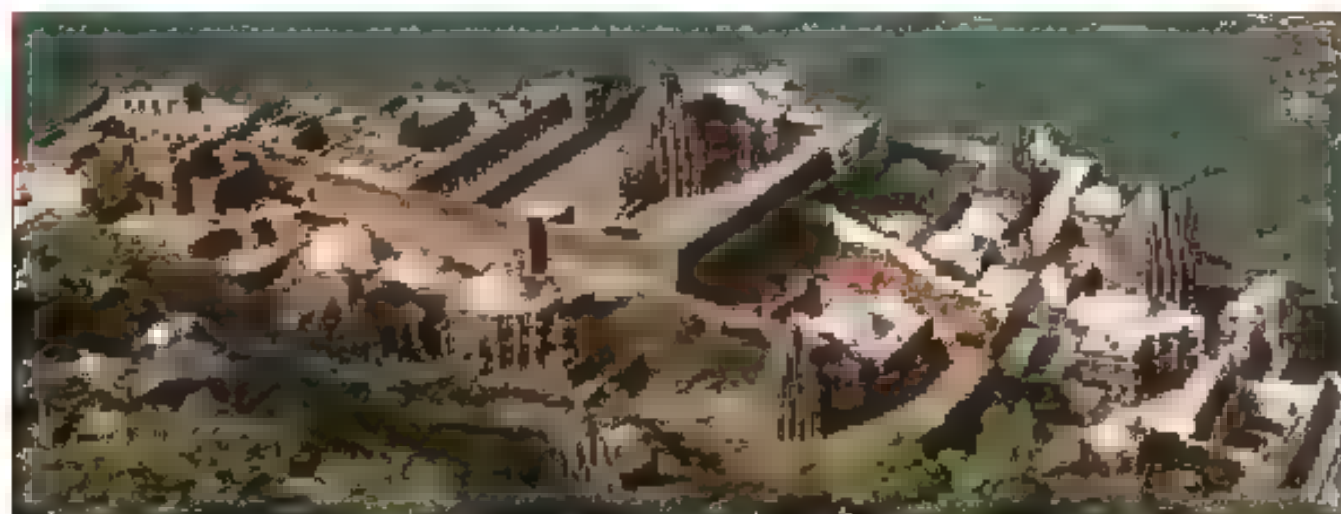
other sisters. An infuriated Daksha cursed his son-in-law, causing him to lose his lustre. In despair, Som turned to Shiva and served him with such zealous devotion that Shiva gave him respite from the curse – he would wax for half the month and wane for the rest. In gratitude the Moon God built a Shiva temple at Somnath.



The Somnath Temple, visited by devotees of Shiva







The impressive Jain temple complex on Girnar Hill, just outside Junagadh

Junagadh 17

Junagadh district 393 km (244 miles)
SW of Ahmedabad 📍 168,700 🏠
🚗 📞 Majiwadi Darwaza, (0285) 262
1201 🕒 Mon–Sat 📺 Bhavnath
Fair (Feb/Mar), Kartik Mela (Oct/Nov)

Junagadh, which means “Old Fort” takes its name from the ancient fort of Uparkot, built in the 4th century on a plateau at the eastern edge of the town. The fort is surrounded by massive walls, over 20 m (66 ft) high in places, and a 90-m (295-ft) deep moat inside the walls. This once teemed with crocodiles that were fed on criminals and political enemies. An ornate, triple-arched gateway marks the entrance to the fort. Inside a cobbled path leads past Hindu temples to the now deserted **Jami Masjid** at the top of the plateau. Its carved stonework and pillars show that it was constructed on the remains of a destroyed Hindu temple. Nearby are a cluster of Buddhist caves dating to the 2nd century. The fort also has two fine 11th-century stepwells, the Navghan Kuan and the Ad Charan Vav.

In the mid-19th century the nawabs of Junagadh moved down from the old fort into new colonial-style palaces in the city. The **Durbar Hall** of the City Palace, built in 1870, houses a museum with the typical trappings of royalty – palanquins, silver thrones and old armour. A complex of royal mausoleums can be seen

near the city’s railway station, the most notable of which is the **Mahabat Maqbara** with splendid silver doors.

Junagadh’s main attraction, however, is **Girnar Hill**, 6 km (4 miles) east of the city. An extinct volcano, this has been a holy site for Buddhists, Jains and Hindus since the 3rd century BC. Over 4,000 steps



Intricate carving on Mahabat Maqbara

lead to the top of the 1,080-m (3,543-ft) high hill. En route is an **Ashokan Rock Edict**, dating to 250 BC (see p42), that conveys Emperor Ashoka’s message of non-violence and peace. Halfway up the hill are a cluster of beautiful Jain temples. Most notable among them is the **Neminath Temple** enshrining a black marble image of the 22nd Jain *tirthankara* (see p396) who

is believed to have died here. The 12th-century **Amba Mata Temple**, at the summit, is very popular with newlyweds who come seeking blessings for conjugal bliss.

🏛 Durbar Hall Museum

Tel (0285) 262 1685 🕒 Thu–Tue
📺 2nd & 4th Sat 📺

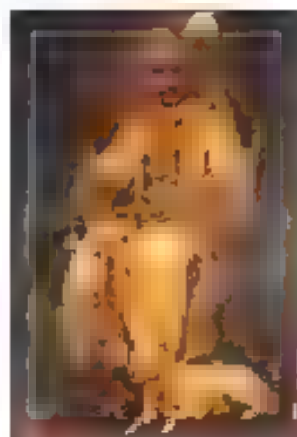
Porbandar 18

Porbandar district 404 km (251 miles)
SW of Ahmedabad 📍 133,100 🏠
🚗 📞 Mon–Sat 📞 (0286) 221 085.
📺 extra charges

Once a major port on the Arabian Sea, Porbandar is today famous as Mahatma Gandhi’s birthplace. The house where Gandhi was born in 1869 still stands in a small alley, in the western part of the city. Next door is the **Kirti Mandir Museum** with photographs from the Mahatma’s life, and extracts

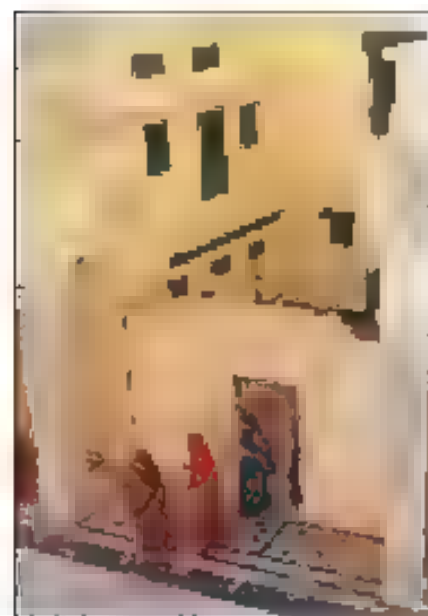
THE NAWAB OF JUNAGADH AND HIS DOGS

The 11th Nawab of Junagadh (1900–59), like his forebears, had a passion for breeding dogs, and these pedigreed pooches, 800 of them, were housed in luxury with separate rooms and personal attendants. The Nawab even held elaborate banquets to celebrate their “nuptials”. On the eve of India’s independence, when the princely states were given the option of either remaining in India or becoming a part of Pakistan, the Nawab’s decision to accede to Pakistan was thwarted by popular protest. The Nawab, however, decided to leave Junagadh. When the time for departure came, the Nawab, true to form, boarded the aircraft with his dogs, leaving behind his entire harem of concubines.



Portrait of the Nawab with his favourite dog

from his speeches and writings. The city has little else to attract visitors and in recent years it has gained the dubious distinction of housing local mafia dons. Interestingly large sections of Gujarat's diasporic population originated from this district



Entrance to the Kirti Mandir Museum, Porbandar

Dwarka 19

Jamnagar district, 453 km (282 miles) W of Ahmedabad. Janmash-tami (Jul/Aug) (02892, 23 4013

Legend has it that about 5,000 years ago, Lord Krishna (see p679) forsook his kingdom at Mathura (see p178) and came to live on the seafront at Dwarka, where he founded a glittering new city. It is believed that the city was subsequently submerged under the sea. Whether or not this is myth or fact, recent excavations of the seabed have indeed established the existence of a submerged city in the vicinity of Dwarka.

Hindu pilgrims flock to Dwarka throughout the year. The city's main temple is the towering **Dwarkadhish Temple**, dating to the 16th century. Built of granite and sandstone on a patch area of 540 m (1,772 ft), it is supported by 60 pillars and rises seven storeys to an impressive height of 51 m (167 ft).

Situated a short distance to its east is the small, lavishly carved **Rukmini Temple**. Built in the 12th century, it is dedicated to Krishna's wife

Jamnagar 20

Jamnagar district, 308 km (191 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. 447,800.

10 km (6 miles) W of city Mon–Sat

Founded by a local prince Jam Rawal, in 1540, Jamnagar's old walled city is dominated by the **Lakhota Fort**, the original seat of its rulers, and the **Ranmal Lake** which surrounds it. The fort was badly damaged during the earthquake in January 2001, though visitors are still allowed inside. The museum in the fort has fine sculptures from nearby excavation sites, dating from the 9th to 18th centuries. Close by is the Kotha Bastion which once stored the rulers' arsenal.

In the heart of the old town is the circular **Darbar Gadh** where the Jamsahibs (as the rulers were called) held public audiences. This structure was also damaged heavily in the 2001 earthquake, but the ground floor is safe for visitors. The lanes leading off from here are worth exploring as the city is famous for its tie-dye fabric and silver jewellery. In this area are two Jain temples, the **Shantinath** and **Adinath Temples**, entirely covered with mirrorwork, gold leaf, murals and mosaics. Close to them is the 19th-century **Ratanbai Mosque** its doors inlaid with mother-of-pearl. In the early 20th century, Jamnagar was ruled by the famous cricketer K. Ranjit Singhji (r 1907–33). The city acquired several elegant public buildings and parks under his able administration.

Lakhota Fort Museum

Thu–Tue 2nd & 4th Sat

Environs

The **Marine National Park**, in the Gulf of Kutch, is 30 km (19 miles) from Jamnagar. An archipelago of 42 islands, the park's marine life is best viewed from the island of Porbandar.

Marine National Park

Jamnagar jetty. For permits contact the Park Director, Jamnagar, (0288) 255 2077

Rajkot 21

Rajkot district, 216 km (134 miles) W of Ahmedabad. 966,700

1 km (0.6 miles) NW of city centre. Bhavnagar House, (0281) 223 4507 Mon–Sat

The headquarters of the Saurashtra region (southwest Gujarat) during the British Raj, modern Rajkot is a commercial and industrial town. The centre of the region's groundnut trade, it is also reputed for its handicrafts.

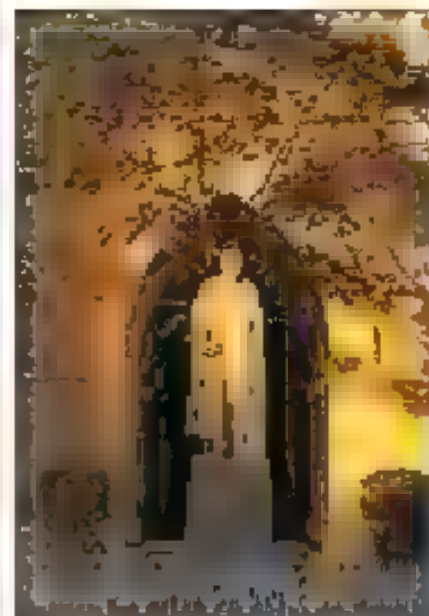
Rajkot's many 19th-century buildings give it a distinctly colonial flavour. The **Watson Museum** in Jubilee Bagh, named after a British Political Agent, has a fine collection of portraits of local rulers, tribal artifacts, archaeological finds from Harappan sites and a large statue of Queen Victoria. The impressive **Rajkumar College**, established by the British for the sons of the Gujarat nobility, remains a prestigious public school.

Watson Museum

Tel (0281, 222 3065 9am–1pm, 3–6pm Thu–Tue 2nd & 4th Sat extra charges

Environs

Wankaner Palace, 39 km (24 miles) northeast of Rajkot, is an eclectic mix of Mughal, Italian and Victorian-Gothic styles. Though still inhabited by the former royal family, a portion is now a luxury hotel. **Halvad**, 125 km (78 miles) north of Rajkot, has a 17th-century lakeside palace.



Statue of the first principal, Rajkumar College, Rajkot



Rabari women near Bhuj, bringing water home

Bhuj 22

Kutch district, 217 km (135 miles)
W of Ahmedabad. 121,100
7 km (4 miles) N of city centre
 Gujarat Tourism, Toran Rann
Resort, Mirzapur Bhuj, (02832) 22
4950 Ashadh, B'j (Jul/Aug)

Until the earthquake of January 2001 reduced much of Bhuj to rubble, this was a fascinating walled city, with beautiful palaces and *bavelis* and a bazaar famous for its rich handicrafts and jewellery. Bhuj was the capital of the prosperous princely state of Kutch, whose wealth derived from its sea trade with East

Africa and the Persian Gulf ports. African slaves were an important part of Kutch's maritime trade, and their many descendants still live in the city. The town's main attraction was the **Darbargadh Palace** complex, which houses the fabulous **Aina**

Mahal or "Palace of Mirrors". Built in 1752, it was damaged in the 2001 earthquake and was temporarily closed down but has now been re-opened after extensive renovation. The palace and its contents are linked to the remarkable life of its Gujarati architect, Ramsinh Malam. Shipwrecked off the East African coast as a 12-year-old, he was rescued by a Dutch ship and taken to the Netherlands, where he spent the next 17 years. There, he blossomed as a craftsman, mastering Deft tile-making, glass-blowing, enamelling and clock-making. When he returned home, the ruler of

Kutch, Rao Lakha, gave him an opportunity to display these skills. The Aina Mahal was thus decorated with Venetian-style chandeliers, Deft blue tiles, enamelled silver objects and chiming clocks – all made locally under Ramsinh's supervision. At the same time, local crafts of the highest quality were also displayed, such as a superb ivory-inlaid door, jewelled shields and swords, and a marvelously detailed 15-m (49-ft) long scroll painting of a royal procession, complete with African pageboys. All these form a part of the palace museum.

The royal cenotaphs, the Swaminarayan Temple and the bazaar are now unfortunately in ruins, but the excellent **Folk Arts Museum** still stands. It has a choice collection of Kutch textiles and local crafts, and a reconstructed village of Rabari *bhoongas* (see p430).

Folk Arts Museum

Mandvi Rd. Tel (02832) 220 541
 Mon-Sat

EARTHQUAKE IN GUJARAT

On 26 January 2001, at 8:46am, as India celebrated its Republic Day, a devastating earthquake struck Gujarat. Its epicentre was in Kutch. Measuring 7.7 on the Richter Scale, it destroyed most of Bhuj, the headquarters of Kutch district, as well as Anjar, the second-largest town in Kutch, and razed 450 villages in the district to the ground. Among the 20,000 people killed in the earthquake were 400 school children of Anjar, who were crushed under the rubble of falling buildings in a narrow street as they marched jauntily through town in the Republic Day Parade. In the state capital, Ahmedabad, most of those killed were trapped in recently-built high-rise apartment buildings, which collapsed like houses of cards while ironically, centuries-old historic monuments throughout the state suffered relatively little damage. An exception was the spectacular 18th-century Darbargadh Palace in Bhuj, with its richly decorated interiors showcasing the finest Gujarati craftsmanship. Much of the damage it suffered is irreparable; however, after some necessary renovation it is open to visitors yet again. In contrast, the traditional, round-roofed *bhoongas* of the semi-nomadic Rabaris of Kutch withstood the earthquake remarkably well. Gujarat, and in particular Kutch, has always been an area of seismic activity, and some historians believe this is one reason that cities of the Indus Valley Civilization (see p41), such as Dholavira and Lothal, declined around 1900 BC. In more recent times, 1,100 people died in the 1819 earthquake and 7,000 in the 1956 earthquake. The disaster of 2001 made more than 250,000 people homeless. A massive rehabilitation effort began almost immediately. Besides the Gujarat government and the Indian Union, over 150 countries readily came forward to provide assistance. Above all, it was the resilience of the residents that brought life back to normal.



Labourers at an earthquake relocation center, Bhuj



The tranquil seafront at Mandvi, once a busy port

Mandvi 23

Bhuj district, 60 km (37 miles) SW of Bhuj. 14,300

This old port town has fine beaches, good swimming, and camel and horse rides along the shore. Close to the beach is the **Vijay Vilas Palace**, an impressive Indo-Edwardian pile built in the 1910s as a royal summer retreat. Its lovely garden, drawing room and rooftop terrace are open to visitors and provide beautiful views of the sea. In the town is the curious 18th-century **Old Palace** of the Kutch rulers (now a girls' school). Architecturally a blend of local and European styles, its façade is decorated with cherubic Dutch boys holding wine goblets. Architect Ramsay Maham's statue salutes his adopted country.

Vijay Vilas Palace

Thu–Tue extra charges.

Dholavira 24

Bhuj district, 250 km (155 miles) NE of Bhuj. For permission contact the Superintendent of Police, Bhuj, (02832) 25 0444. daily

Dholavira is a small village where archaeologists have unearthed extensive remains of a city that dates back to about 3000 BC. Lying on Khadir island in the Rann of Kutch it is, along with Lothal (see p416), the largest known Indus Valley settlement in India. The site reveals evidence of a remarkable, planned city with broad roads, containing a central citadel, a middle town with

spacious dwellings, a lower town with open spaces for markets and festivals, and two statues. An intriguing ten-character inscription (which is still to be deciphered) is on the citadel's northern gate. The presence of large reservoirs and a dam reflect the existence of sophisticated systems for harvesting water.



The Asiatic wild ass, found in Kutch

The Little Rann of Kutch Sanctuary 25

Kutch district. **Entry points:**

Dhrangadhra, 130 km (81 miles) W of Ahmedabad & Dasada, 117 km (73 miles) NW of Ahmedabad.

Dhrangadhra, 20 km (12 miles) S of park. Dhrangadhra & Dasada, then bus or jeep. Gujarat Tourism, Ashram Rd, Ahmedabad, (079) 2657 8046. For permits & tours contact Forest Office, Dhrangadhra. extra charges.

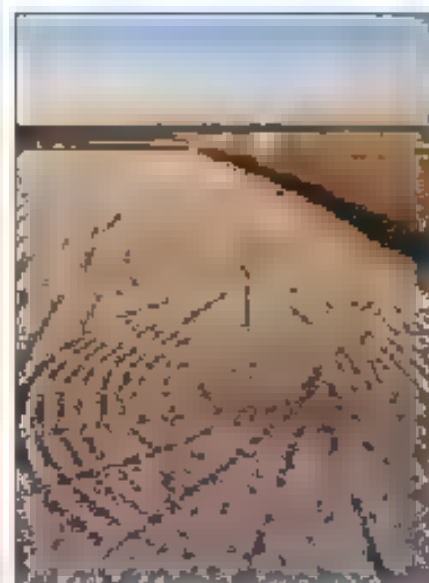
An expanse of salt flats and grasslands in northwest Gujarat, the Little Rann of Kutch has a stark and unforgettable beauty – in sunlight the salt crystals in the sand glitter like diamonds, while at night they bathe the landscape in an eerie blue haze. Every year, during the monsoon, when the sea and rivers flood the region, the salt flats are transformed into great marshy swamps, with patches of higher ground forming grassy islands known as *bets*. Some 4,841 sq km (1,869 sq miles) of this unique ecosystem, which supports a variety of rare fauna from a wildlife sanctuary which is

one of the last refuges of the Asiatic wild ass (*Equus hemionus kbur*) known locally as *gborkbur*. Akin to the Tibetan *kiang*, the *gborkbur* is distinguished by a dark stripe along its back. Only about 1,000 of them now remain. Known for its speed (up to 60 km or 37 miles per hour), the wild ass lives in herds led by a stallion, and survives by migrating between the grassy *bets* through the seasons, in search of food.

The sanctuary also has a large population of nilgai (blue bull), black buck, *chinkara* (Indian gazelle), wolves, and the rare caracal. Birdlife includes migratory Demoiselle cranes, pelicans and flamingoes which come to the salt marshes during the winter months.

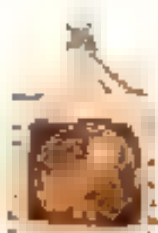
Dhrangadhra and Dasada are both interesting bases from which to

visit the Little Rann of Kutch Sanctuary. Dasada has a 15th-century fort and a village where potters and textile printers practise their craft. The family of Dasada's former feudal chiefs arrange accommodation and guided tours of the Rann. Dhrangadhra, capital of a former princely state, has a fine 18th-century palace and a bazaar with interesting colonial buildings. Tours of the sanctuary can be arranged through the Forest Office here. Accommodation is available in the government rest house.



Salt pans in the Rann, a major source of livelihood in Kutch

Rural Life and Art in Kutch



Clay storage niche

Kutch is home to several pastoral communities, many of them semi-nomadic herders of camels and sheep. Among them are the Rabaris, whose round houses (*bhoongas*) with conical roofs are a distinctive feature of the Kutch landscape. These communities are skilled in a variety of crafts, the vibrant hues and forms of their creations adding beauty to their stark surroundings. Anjar, which used to be the crafts centre of Kutch, was tragically destroyed in the January 2001 earthquake, as were many of the crafts villages near Bhuj. Despite this, the intrepid craftspeople continue to work and sell their creations at shops in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Delhi.



A typical toadstool-shaped Rabari house in Kutch

THE RABARI BHOONGA

The *bhoongas* of the Rabaris, superbly designed for the hot and arid climate of Kutch, are also structurally solid. Most of them withstood the 2001 earthquake. A typical cluster of *bhoongas*, their beautifully decorated interiors displaying the artistic skills of the Rabaris, can be seen at Tunda Vandi, 15 km (9 miles) east of Mandvi.



The roof is conical, with a deep overhang to keep the walls cool. The parasol-shaped roof frame is made of wood, covered with tightly woven thatch.

Small windows, set into the thick walls, are beautifully embellished with brass applique patterns.

The thick walls, tiny windows and thatched roofs provide excellent insulation against the harsh desert climate. The circular shape helps the smooth circulation of air inside.



Bhoongas are built of hard, packed mud and thatch.

Shed for livestock

The *otla* is a platform surrounding the house, shaded by the thatched roof. Women do embroidery and meet their neighbours here.

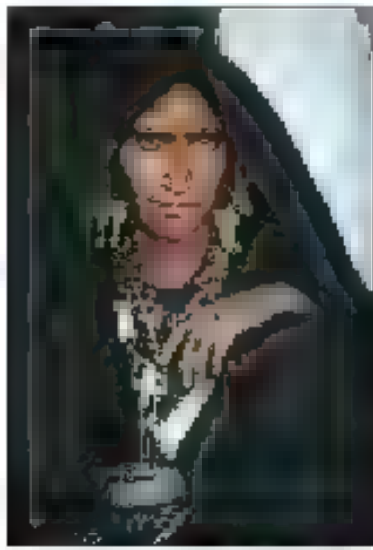
Central courtyard

Entrance

Storage jars and chests, for grain, milk or clothes, are made of clay and decorated by the women with fine bird, animal and geometric motifs.



The circular living space is plastered with white clay, covered with relief patterns and studded with tiny mirrors to provide more light to its dark cool interior. Niche and shelves built into the walls provide storage for items of everyday use.



Rabari women dress in black wool, dramatically offset with silver jewellery. They also sport tattoos of peacocks and camels, as well as small crosses to keep away the evil eye.



Rabari men, in contrast to the women, wear only white, with fine embroidery at the back of their pleated kecurans (jackets). White and red woven shawls and voluminous turbans complete their attire.

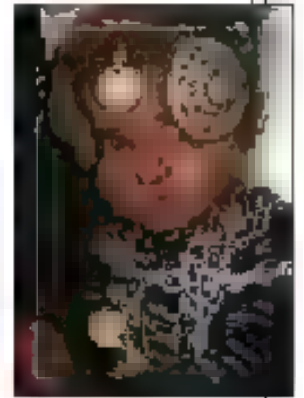
PEOPLE

The pastoral communities of Kutch include Jaths, Ahirs, Meghwals, Bharwads and Sodhas as well as Rabaris. While the men wander with their flocks, the women, children and elders stay at home, adding to the family income with their crafts skills.

Rabari girls

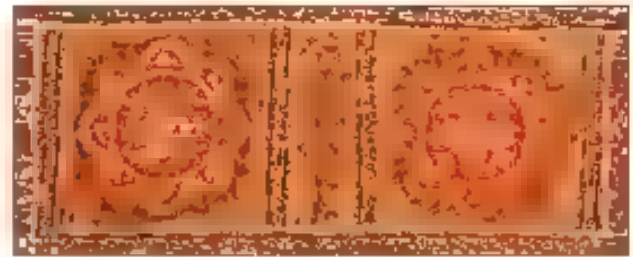
wear the family's finest heirlooms.

They begin embroidering their trousseau dresses as soon as they can hold a needle.

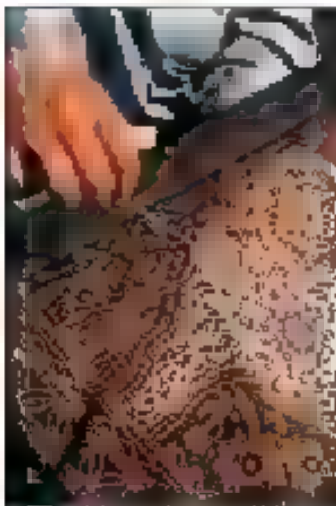


CRAFT

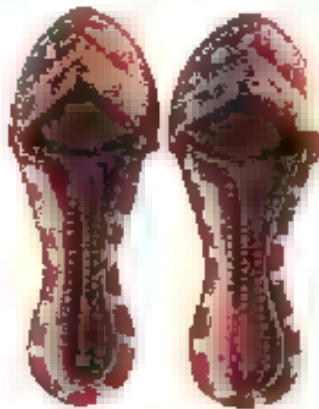
Crafts are not just a means of earning and employment for the rural people of Kutch. They are also a proud and creative expression of each community's distinct culture and identity, through which utilitarian objects like cupboards, quilts, shoes, cowbells or clay dishes are transformed into art forms.



Embroidery is done by most semi-nomadic communities. This section of a large wall hanging shows the work of a Rabari woman.



Rogan, a speciality of Niruna village near Bhuj, is a unique technique by which cloth is decorated with intricate embossed lacquer-work patterns.



Leather objects are made by Meghwal men. They are embellished with bright tassels and embroidery.



Pottery dishes such as this large platter are used at village feasts. They are made by the men of the Kunthbar (potter) community.



Patchwork in vivid colours, using scraps and waste material, is done by Bharwad women to make items such as quilts, awnings and camel saddle covers.



Silverwork is crafted by the Sodha community, who also make jewellery to order in traditional designs, for the other pastoral communities.





SOUTHWESTERN INDIA



INTRODUCING SOUTHWESTERN
INDIA 434 441

MUMBAI 442 463

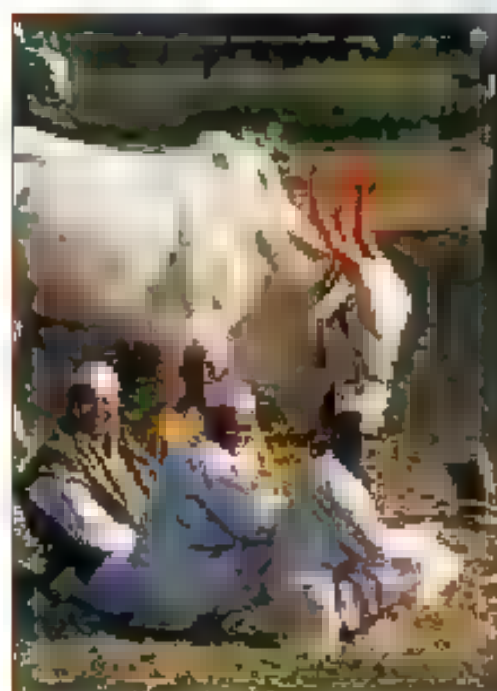
MAHARASHTRA 464 483

GOA 484 509

KARNATAKA 510-545

Introducing Southwestern India

Encompassing the three states of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, Southwestern India contains the central Deccan Plateau, the narrow Konkan coastline and the craggy Western Ghats that run parallel to the coast. Its major city is Mumbai (Bombay), India's vibrant commercial capital. The region's varied attractions include Goa's idyllic beaches and Portuguese churches, the ancient caves and temples of Ajanta and Ellora, and the magnificent ruins of Hampi. Further south are Bangalore, often described as Asia's Silicon Valley, the former princely state of Mysore, and the great Hoysa temples of Belur and Halebidu.






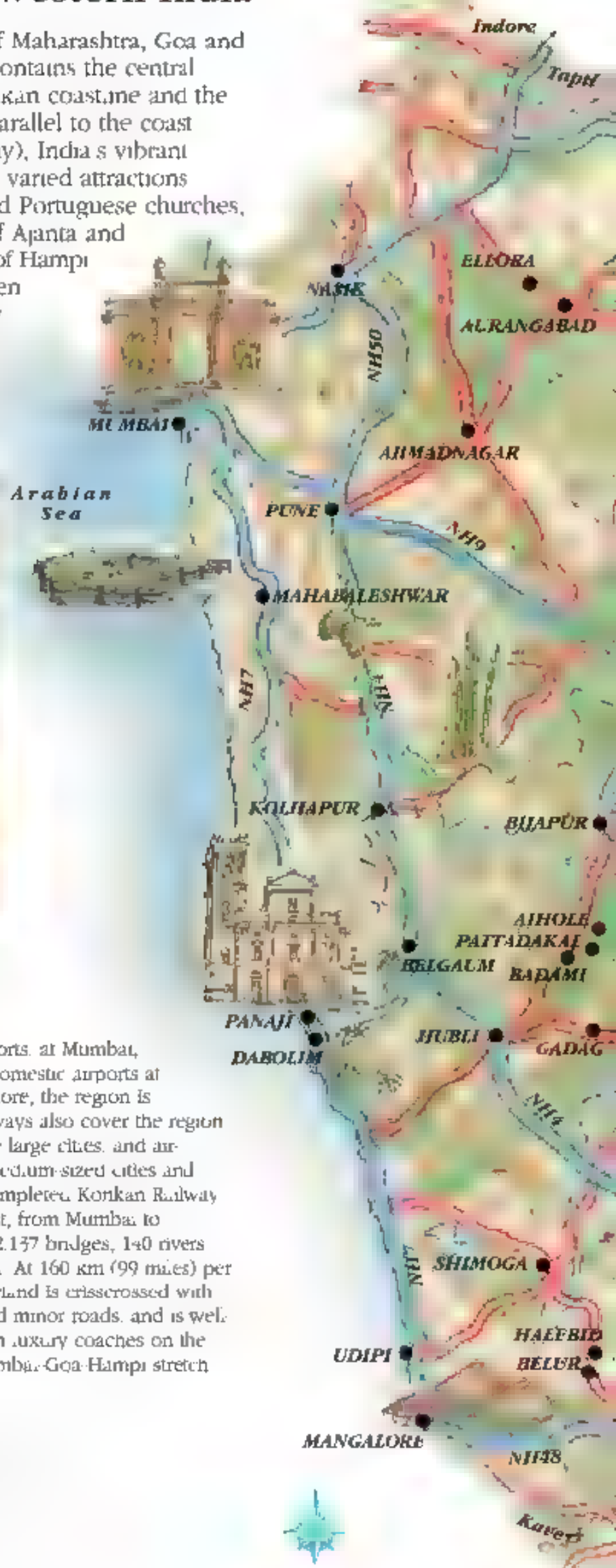
Maharashtrian farmers with their oxen, often colourfully decorated

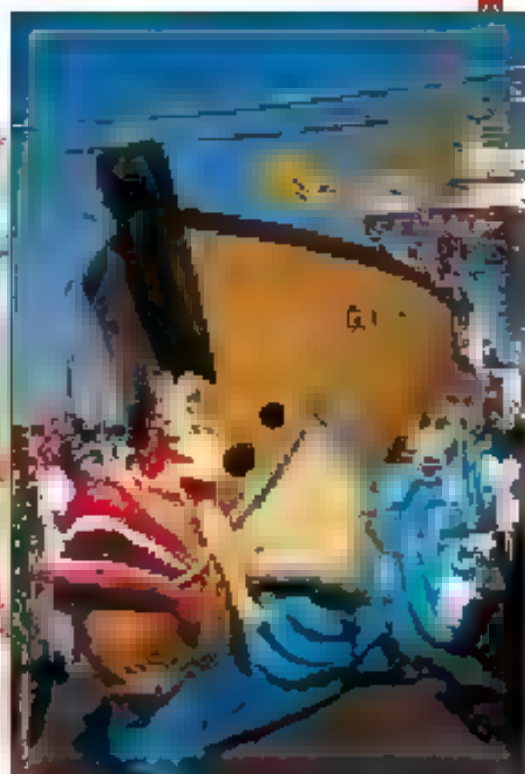
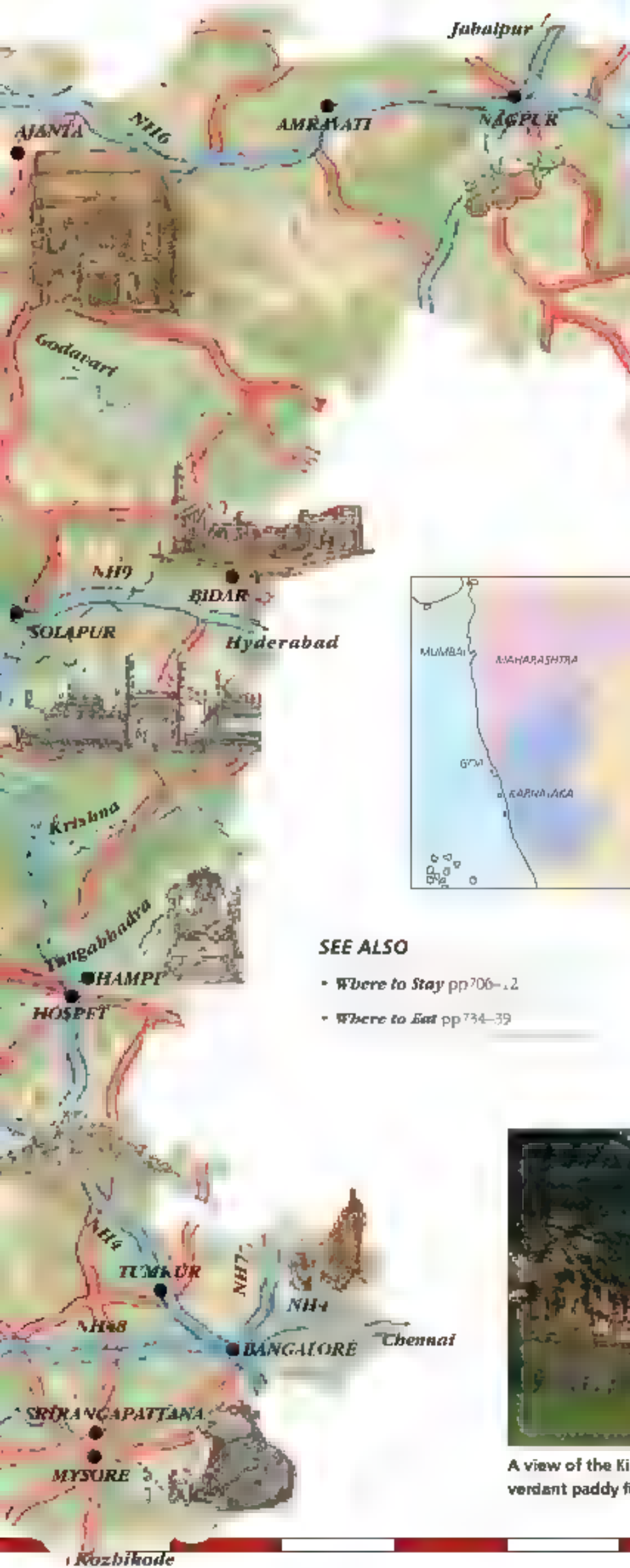
GETTING AROUND

This region has three international airports, at Mumbai, Bangalore and Dabolim in Goa. With domestic airports at Pune, Aurangabad, Nagpur and Mangalore, the region is well connected by air. The Indian Railways also cover the region extensively. Fast trains run between the large cities, and air-conditioned trains also connect most medium-sized cities and townships. The spectacular, recently completed, Konkan Railway runs 760 km (472 miles) along the coast, from Mumbai to Thiruvananthapuram (in Kerala), over 2,137 bridges, 140 rivers and through 83 km (52 miles) of tunnel. At 160 km (99 miles) per hour it is India's fastest line. The hinterland is crisscrossed with numerous national highways, major and minor roads, and is well connected by bus. Private operators run luxury coaches on the more popular routes, including the Mumbai-Goa-Hampi stretch.

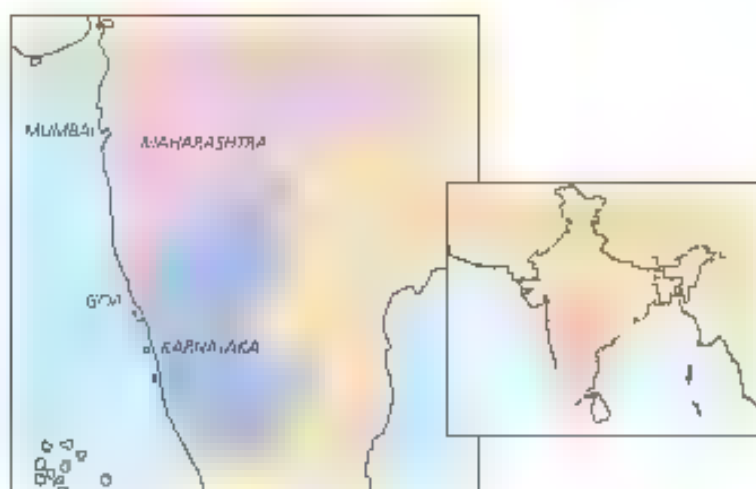
KEY

-  National highway
-  Major road
-  River
-  State border





Colourful floats on parade, during Goa's annual Carnival



SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* pp706–12
- *Where to Eat* pp734–39

0 km 100
0 miles 100



A view of the King's Bathing Ghat surrounded by verdant paddy fields, Srirangapattana, Karnataka

A PORTRAIT OF SOUTHWESTERN INDIA

The southwest is a region of many and varied splendours. Its three states, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, contain golden beaches, wooded hills, serene villages along the picturesque Arabian Sea coastline, and two of India's most cosmopolitan and dynamic cities – Mumbai (formerly Bombay) and Bangalore

Mumbai, capital of Maharashtra, is India's largest and most populous city, as well as its commercial and financial capital. It is also home to the world's largest cinema industry, popularly known as Bollywood. The city presents extraordinary and sometimes shocking contrasts – the glamorous world of film stars

and business tycoons exists side by side with the squalor of slums and shantytowns, where over three million people (nearly one-third of Mumbai's population) live. The dominant image, however, is that of an upbeat, street-smart city full of dynamism and *jete de vivre*.

Mumbai's population includes Marathi-speaking Hindus, a sizeable

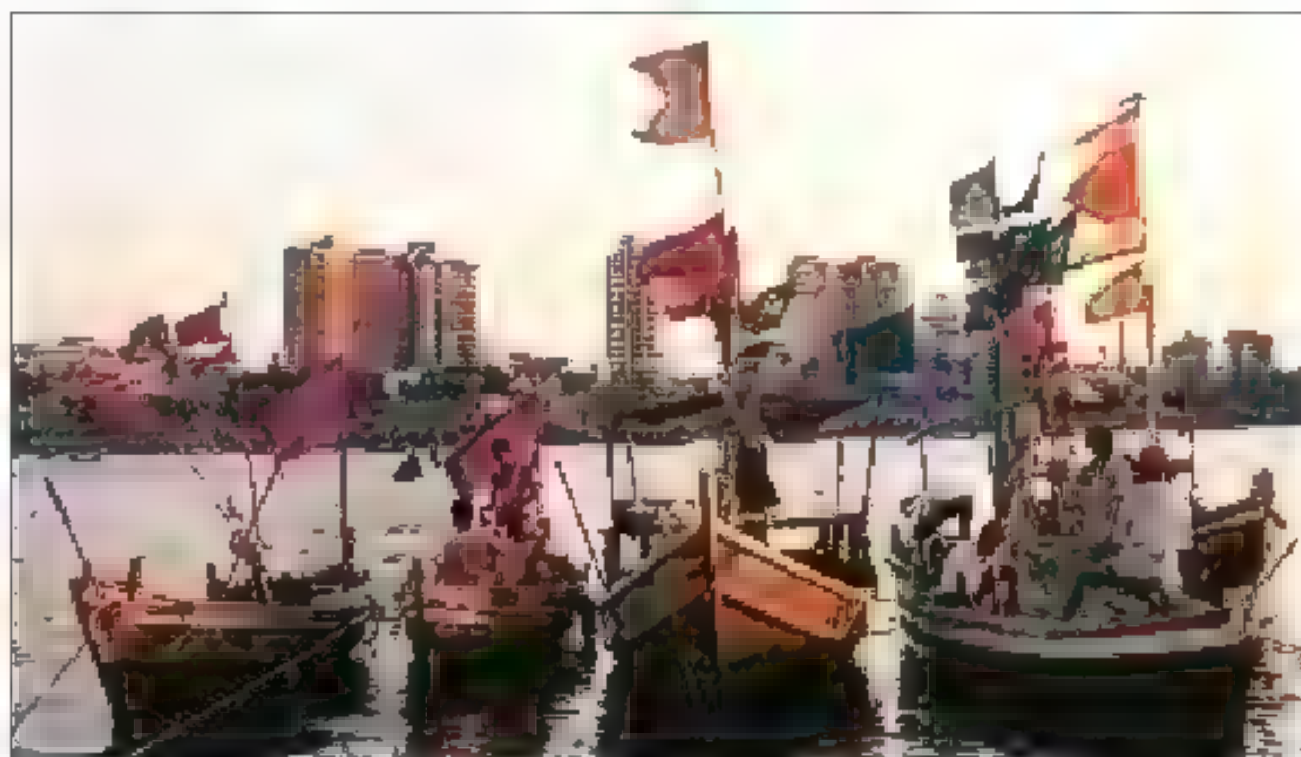
number of Muslims and Christians, as well as Jews, Parsis and other communities from different parts of India, drawn by its vibrant entrepreneurial culture, and often, by dreams of making it big in films. While this makes Mumbai remarkably cosmopolitan, it has on occasion led to sectarian strife,

especially over the past decade, since the rise of the militant Hindu rightwing Shiv Sena Party.

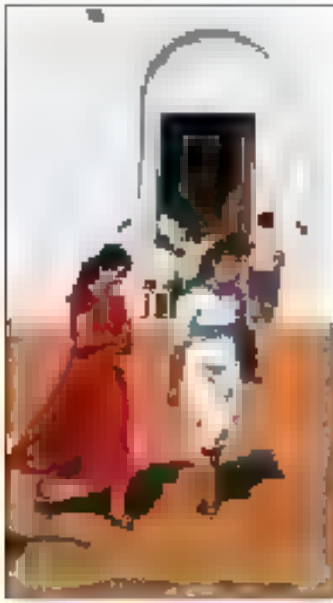
Maharashtra is a vast state, its population of over 96 million making it politically important, and major industries based on cotton, sugar, engineering goods and processed foods lending it economic vitality. In recent years, strawberry fields and



Green coconut



Little fishing boats in Mumbai's harbour, against a backdrop of the city's skyscrapers



Goan women on their way to Sunday Mass

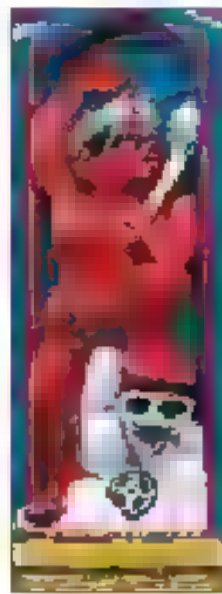
grape vineyards have made their appearance in its rich agricultural hinterland, but the most prized crop remains the Alfonso mango, a particularly sweet and luscious variety, which is exported across the world. Central Maharashtra has two World Heritage sites to its credit, at Ajanta and Ellora (*see pp476–81*). The murals and sculptures found here testify to the common, ancient roots of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Many visitors travel by train from Mumbai to the tiny neighbouring state of Goa. The Konkan Railway which connects the two, and continues southwards to Karnataka, is a wonderful way to see the lush coastal scenery of coconut groves, spice plantations and fishing villages. Goa was a Portuguese colony from 1510 until 1961, when it was liberated by the Indian Army.

The Portuguese departed peacefully, leaving behind a rich cultural legacy in cathedrals and mansions, music, dance, and in its distinctive cuisine.

Another legacy of 450 years of Portuguese rule is in religion – almost one-third of Goa's population is Roman Catholic. Tourism and related industries are today a major source of livelihood here. Visitors from all over the world throng the beautiful beaches, which offer secluded palm-fringed retreats, as well as lively resorts buzzing with bars, cafés and discos.

Karnataka is often described as the geographical and cultural meeting point between India's Dravidian south and its Indo-Aryan north. The state's varied landscape and architecture both reflect this unique melange. Karnataka's narrow strip of fertile coastland is backed by the green hills of the Western Ghats, covered with forests of fragrant sandalwood and teak. These slope down to a vast plateau, watered by the Kaveri and Krishna rivers. This is the state's historic and cultural heartland, dotted with architectural treasures in an extraordinary variety of styles. They were built by local Hindu and Muslim



A Hanuman statue in Nasik, Maharashtra

dynasties, as well as by ambitious rulers from the north, Maratha warriors and medieval Islamic chieftains, all of whom had once established kingdoms here.

Bangalore, the state capital, presents a sharp contrast to Karnataka's historic sites. As the ebullient centre of India's burgeoning computer software industry, this once laid-back town has been transformed into a globalized, high-tech showcase for contemporary India. Several multinational

corporations have opened offices here, while pubs and shopping malls line its streets, catering to a young cosmopolitan population.



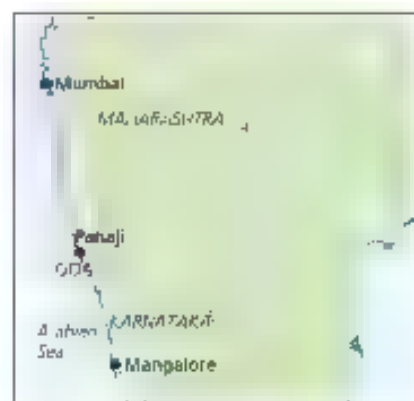
The lush landscape along Karnataka's coastline

The Konkan Coast



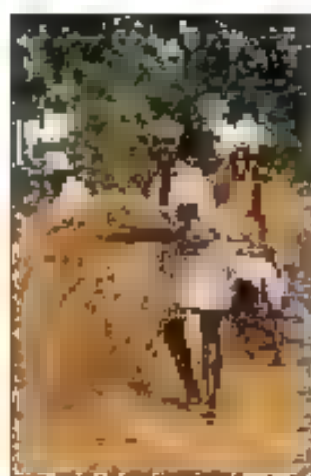
A Konkani fisherwoman

All along the Konkan Coast, from Mumbai to the south of Mangalore, are villages where for over 2,000 years, fishing communities have harvested the fruits of the sea. A distinctive culture has developed in this area, protected by the forested hills of the Western Ghats. Beyond the coastline are fertile paddy fields and plantations of coconut, cashew, betel nut, rubber, pepper and other spices. This is also India's monsoon land, where the Southwest Monsoon is at its heaviest, and where Arab merchants, drawn by the monsoon winds, came to trade long before the Europeans.



LOCATOR MAP

□ *Extent of Area*

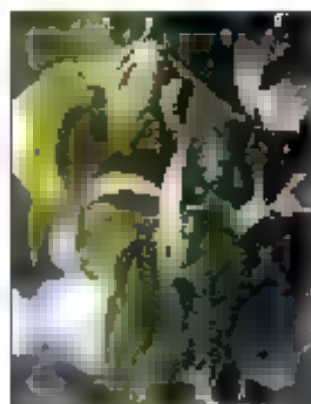


Harvesting the paddy is a full-time occupation for the entire village.



PADDY CULTIVATION

In wet paddy cultivation, seedlings are raised in a nursery and then transplanted in water-logged fields when they are 30 cm (12 in) high.



Pepper, cashew and betel nut are some of the major cash crops that this region grows in abundance.



A rubber plantation bungalow is festooned with strips of cured rubber hanging out to dry.

FISHERFOLK OF THE COAST

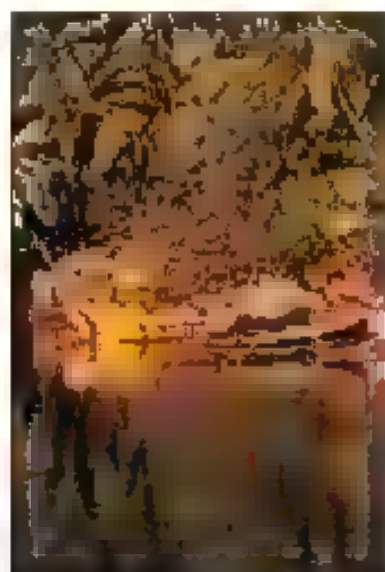
Coastal people belong to different communities, speak their own dialects and celebrate local festivals. Strong and hard-working, their lives are ruled by natural forces.



Fishermen prepare their boats before they set off, just before dawn. The boats return by late morning.



A basket of freshly caught fish is carried to the shore to be sold directly to waiting customers.



Small boats moored in the Konkan backwaters



Coastal dwellings have sloping roofs made of tiles to deflect the heavy rains during the monsoon



These women from Mumbai's small Koli fishing community are dressed in bright festival finery

Flowers are a common form of adornment and are picked each morning by girls and women for their hair



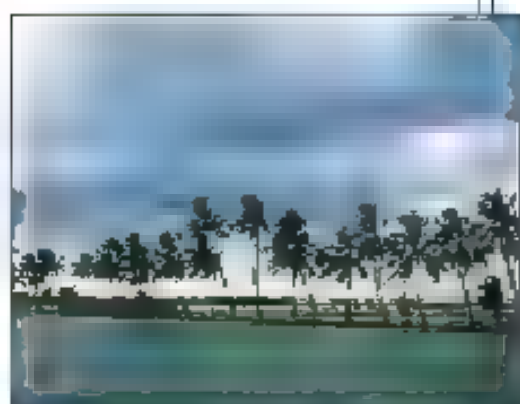
KONKAN COAST

The narrow coastal strip that runs along the Arabian Sea is sheltered by the verdant slopes of the Western Ghats. This region can be explored either by road or on the Konkan Railway (see p434)

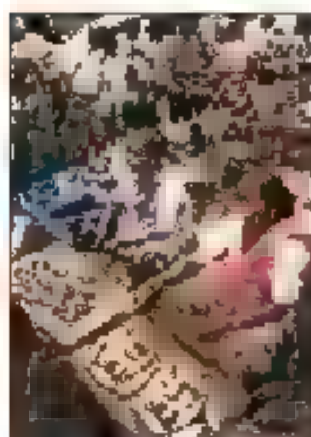


The Western Ghats, or the Sahyadri Range, run in an unbroken line along the coast

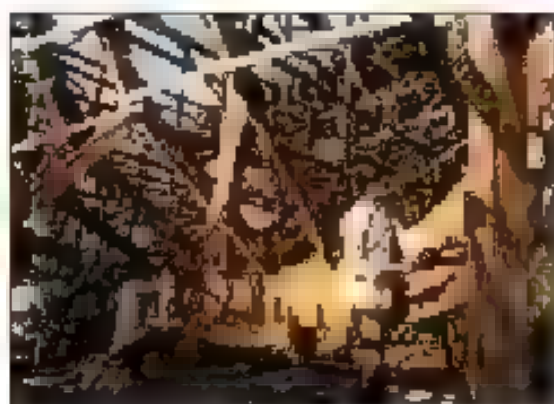
Monsoon clouds herald the onset of the monsoon, when the coast is washed by torrential rains from June to early September



Dried fish is eaten during the monsoon when heavy rains prevent fishing



Local fish markets sell a large variety of freshly caught produce



Boat building is done by expert artisans who repair old boats using traditional methods, as well as build new ones from locally procured wood

The Flavours of Southwestern India

A large part of this region lies on the shores of the Arabian Sea and consequently fish, coconut and rice are the dominant ingredients. Mumbai is a metropolis, home to many groups of people, and the city's cuisine reflects its myriad influences. Further south, along the Konkan Coast to Goa and Mangalore the fish and rice diet has regional variations. Interior Maharashtra has a large number of vegetarian communities especially around Pune, although spicy mutton curries are a speciality of the state. Karnataka's food is a mosaic of distinct communities such as the coastal Udupi vegetarian fare and the meat-based food of Kodagu



Custard apple



A local woman selling bananas, coconuts and other fruit

coconut (*godā*) and *kalāa masalas*. *Koshimbirs* (relishes freshly made with cucumber or carrots) perk up the meal.

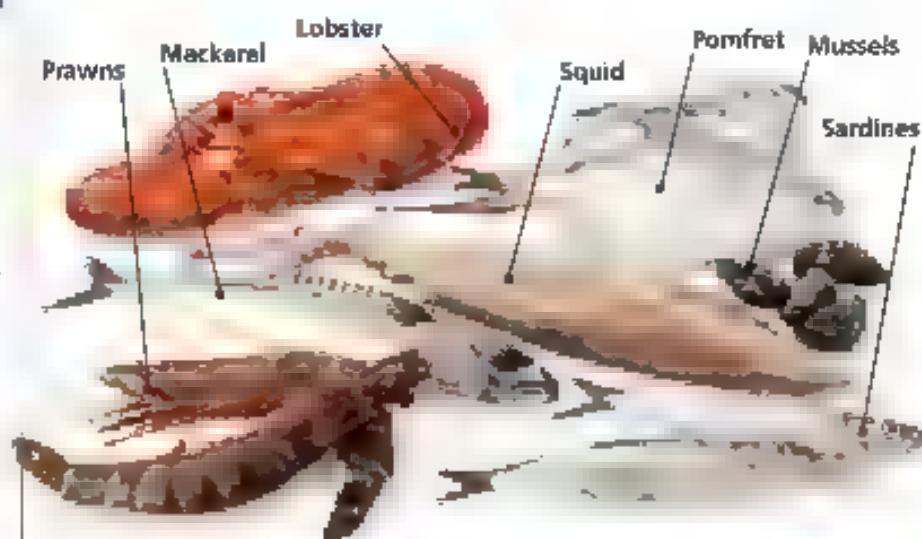
In Karnataka the three staples are rice, *jowar* and *ragi* (finger millet). In rural areas *ragi* is steam-cooked, rolled into balls and served with hot chutney or *buli* (a spicy lentil dish). Variations of the *dosa* (see pp554-5) are also eaten here with coconut chutney and potatoes.

COASTAL FARE

Along the Konkan Coast coconuts, cashew nuts and fresh vegetables are in abundance. However, sea-food predominates and the types of fish available range from the flat pomfret, salmon (*rawas*) and mackerel to prawns, lobsters and clams. Fish is grilled, fried or cooked as curries with fresh coconut and spices. *Rokum*

BASIC DISHES

In Maharashtra, rice, wheat, lentils and *jowar* (sorghum/maize) form the backbone of the people's diet. This accompanies the *bhaji* (a vegetable dish) or *rassa*, (curried vegetables cooked in groundnut oil). The food is distinguished by a blend of spices, coriander, sesame, cumin seeds and dried



Selection of seafood available along the Arabian Sea coastline

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

The culinary choices in this region are varied and range from stalls selling spicy savouries, such as *bhelpuri*, *pani-puri* and *pav-bhaji*, to beach shacks and specialist restaurants. Tastes are eclectic and reflect flavours imported from as far off as Iran (Parsi) and Portugal (Goa).

Karnataka's and Maharashtra's vegetarian food is complemented by the fish, pork and chicken dishes from

Cashew nuts

the Konkan Coast, Goa, Mangalore and Coorg. This fertile region yields fruits, such as *chikoo* (sapodilla/plum), custard apple, mango, papaya and grapes, as well as crops such as sugarcane and cashew and spices, particularly pepper. During the mild winters in south Maharashtra, jaggery is made, and with it, a peanut or sesame toffee (*chikki*).



Akuri, spicy scrambled eggs cooked with tomatoes and onions and garnished with coriander is a Parsi delicacy.



Fishermen unloading the catch of the day, Goa

(a dried sour plum), tamarind, raw mango or the local

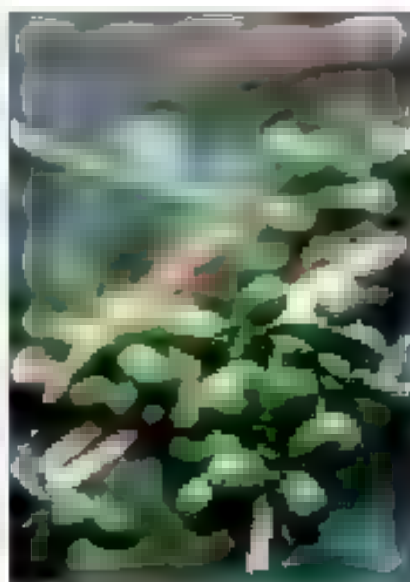
Goan vinegar are used as souring agents. *Kokum*, and coconut milk are also used to make a drink, *sol kadhi*.

Although the coastal area has several culinary features in common, particularly in the preparation of seafood, Goa's cuisine is different as it combines Portuguese and local flavours. Some typical dishes include *petee* a Portuguese (a fish curry with olive oil) and *ambot-tik* (a tangy fish curry with tamarind). Goan chilies are famed for their colour and are used to make the *recheito masala* which is added to fish, pork and mutton curries.

Malvan fish dishes are equally tasty, especially the *mori chi aamti* (a spicy shark curry) and *bangda* (whole mackerel fried with spices)

OTHER FAVOURITES

The cuisine of the Parsis of Mumbai reflects their Persian ancestry. Their food is mainly non-vegetarian and includes *patra ni machhi* (fish steamed in a banana



Coffee berries from a plantation in Coorg, Karnataka

leaf) *jardaloo sah bat* (mutton with apricots), and the popular *dhan sakh* (a meat and lentil casserole).

The Kodavas of Coorg have a distinct culture and cuisine and are the only Hindu community that allows non-vegetarian food and alcohol to be served at weddings. *Pandi* (pork) curry is a favourite and is eaten with steamed rice balls (*kadumbuttu*). *Koli* curry, a chicken curry, and *bembra* curry made from bamboo shoots are other specialties, as are their wonderful rice preparations, such as *noolputtu* (rice noodles) or *nduputtu* (rice pancakes), enjoyed by other communities too.

ON THE MENU

Amti Sweet and sour lentils

Balachão Prawns or chicken cooked with pickling spices

Bebinca A multi-layered cake

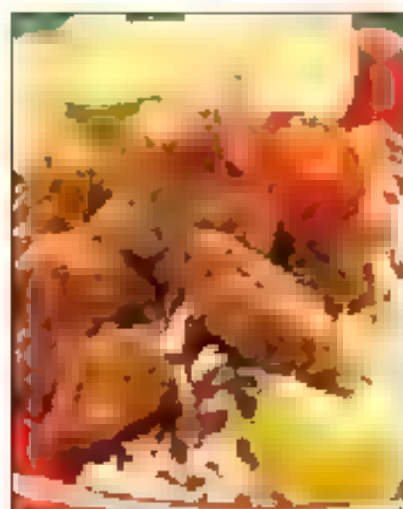
Kesari bhath Sweet made of semolina, sugar and saffron

Kolhapuri mutton Mutton with chilies, coconut, aniseed, and poppy seed

Moru kolumbu Vegetables in a yogurt sauce

Patra ni machhi Fish with a coriander-coconut chutney steamed in banana leaves.

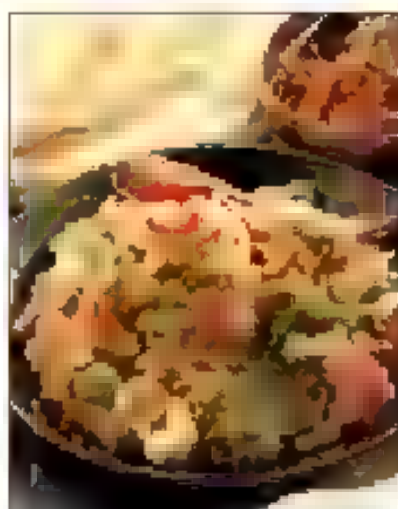
Suran Steamed yam garnished with dry red chilies and curry leaves



Vindaloo a dish of pork cooked in a marinade of vinegar, red chilies and other spices, is Goa's signature dish



Fugad is finely sliced, stir-fried cabbage garnished with coconut and chilies. Beans can also be used



Bisibele hulyana, a preparation of lentils, rice and vegetables, is a one-dish meal from Karnataka



MUMBAI

Mumbai (formerly Bombay), capital of Maharashtra is India's most dynamic cosmopolitan and crowded city. The country's financial centre and its busiest port, Mumbai is also home to the world's biggest cinema industry, popularly known as Bollywood. Some 15 million people, from billionaire tycoons to homeless pavement dwellers, live in this teeming megalopolis.

Consisting of seven swampy islands when the Portuguese acquired it in 1534, Bombay (from the Portuguese *Bom Bahia* or "Good Bay") came to the British Crown in 1661 as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza when she married Charles II. Finding little use for the islands, the British then leased them for a pittance to the East India Company, which quickly realized their potential as an excellent natural harbour in the Arabian Sea. By the 18th century, Bombay had become the major city and shipbuilding yard on the western coast, and by the 19th century land reclamations had joined the islands into the narrow promontory that it is today. The promise of commercial opportunities lured communities of Gujaratis, Parsis (see p447) and Baghdadi or



Sephardic Jews to settle in Bombay, giving the city its vibrant multicultural identity. The city has now reverted to its local name, Mumbai, from Mumba Devi, the eight-armed goddess worshipped by the Koli fishermen who were the islands' original inhabitants.

Mumbai is a city of striking contrasts. Here skyscrapers stand next to stately Victorian buildings, noisy traditional bazaars adjoin glittering new shopping malls, and opulent neighbourhoods are surrounded by sprawling slums. Swelling Mumbai's population and stretching its suburban environs are migrants from all over the country who continue to flock to this "city of gold", in search of fame, fortune, or just a bit part in a Bollywood movie.



Swirling traffic around Flora Fountain in the heart of Mumbai

Exploring Mumbai

Mumbai is a long, narrow promontory covering 430 sq km (166 sq miles), which juts into the Arabian Sea. Its downtown is the historic Fort area in South Mumbai that derives its name from earlier colonial fortifications. This is the city's nerve centre, with the best known sights, hotels and restaurants. The posh residential area of Malabar Hill lies along the western coastline, just north of Marine Drive. Suburban Mumbai, with its sprawling new developments, stretches northwards from Bandra.



Fishing boats, decorated for Holi, at the seafront in South Mumbai

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Historic Buildings, Streets & Neighbourhoods

- Ballard Estate ⑧
- Bandra ⑪
- Colaba Causeway ①
- Flora Fountain ⑩
- Gateway of India ①
- General Post Office ⑪
- Horniman Circle ①
- Kala Ghoda pp448-9 ④
- Khoriachwad ⑮
- Malabar Hill ⑮
- Marine Drive ④
- Mumbai Stock Exchange ③
- Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg ⑦
- Town Hall ②
- Victoria Terminus pp454-5 ⑩
- Wellington Fountain ④

Historic Sites

- Elephanta Island ②

Museums

- The Prince of Wales Museum* pp450-51 ⑤

Temples & Mosques

- Banganga ⑮
- Haji Ali Mosque ⑮
- Mahalaxmi Temple ③

Beaches & Parks

- Juhu Beach ⑮
- Samay Ganch: National Park ⑮

Shops & Markets

- Crawford Market ⑩

Entertainment

- Film City ⑦

SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* pp706-08
- *Where to Eat* pp 34-5





LOCATOR MAP

KEY

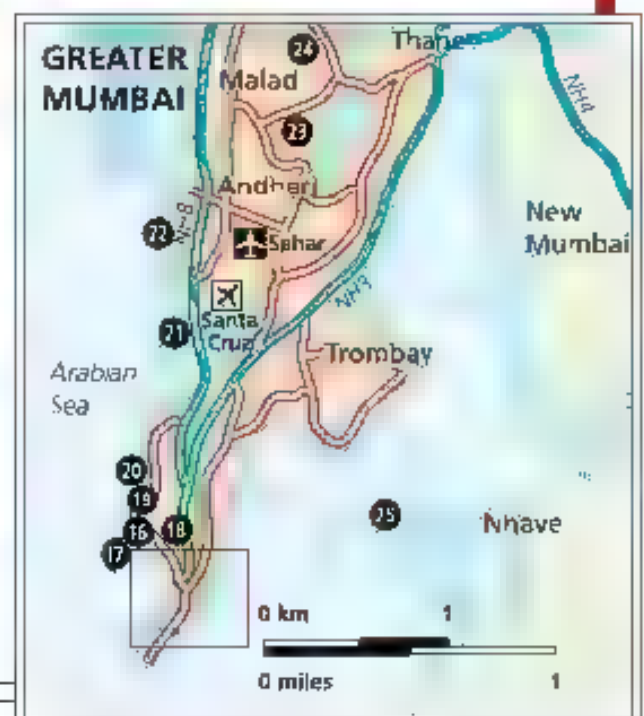
- Street-by-street area see pp448-9
- International airport
- Domestic airport
- Railway station
- Bus station
- Ferry port
- Tourist information
- Hospital
- Police station
- Post office
- Church
- National highway
- Major road

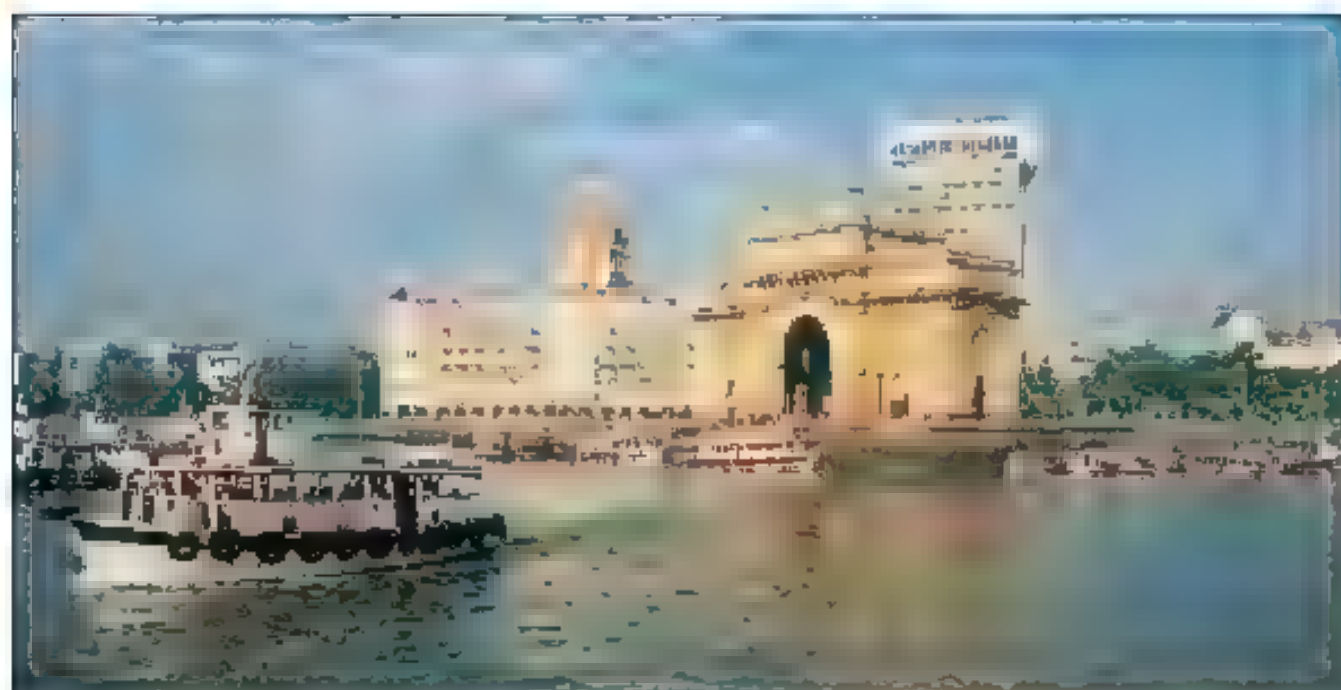
GETTING AROUND

Three punctual, if crowded, suburban railway lines link the northern suburbs to the city centre and the southern tip. A private car taxi, or the red BEST buses are all convenient and reasonably priced ways to get around within the city.




Doubledecker bus at Victoria Terminus (see pp454-5)





The Gateway of India with the red-domed Taj Mahal Hotel behind it

Gateway of India ①

Apollo Bunder, Chhatrapati Shivaji Marg & P.J. Ramchandani Marg. 

Mumbai's most famous landmark, the Gateway of India, was the first sight to greet travellers to Indian shores during the heyday of the British Raj. Ironically, it also became the exit point for British troops after India gained independence in 1947. It was built to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary in 1911 en route to the Delhi Durbar, but in fact the King and Queen were met with a mock cardboard and pastiche structure – the actual Triumphal Arch, built in honey coloured basalt, was only completed in 1924, years after the royal visit. This monumental structure with two large reception halls, arches and minarets, and embellishments inspired by medieval Gujarati architecture, was designed by the Scottish architect George Wittet, and commands a spectacular view of the sea. The Gateway looks particularly impressive at night when it is illuminated, with the inky black sea stretching into the horizon beyond it. This is the heart of Mumbai's tourist district, the

city's most popular gathering place, and always teems with locals, visitors, vendors and boatmen. Boats and barges moored here provide regular services across the bay and to islands such as Elephanta (see p461). They can also be hired for leisurely trips down the Mumbai coastline.

North of the Gateway of India, towards Wellington Fountain, is Chhatrapati Shivaji Road. Formerly Apollo Pier Road, it has now been renamed after Shivaji (see p471).



Statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji opposite the Gateway

Maharashtra's great warrior-hero. Shivaji's equestrian statue is placed here in a pleasant garden in line with the Gateway. Standing nearby is another statue, that of the great

19th-century Hindu philosopher and reformist, Swami Vivekananda (see p615).

Around the Gateway are some majestic buildings dating from the colonial era. These include the old **Yacht Club** which now houses the offices of the Atomic Energy Commission (entry restricted), the **Royal Bombay Yacht Club**, originally built as a residential annexe to the Old Yacht Club, and the **Taj Mahal Hotel** (see p768), behind which lies the busy Colaba Causeway.

The stately, red-domed Taj Mahal Hotel was built in 1903 by a prominent Parsi industri-

alist, Jamshedji Tata (see p225) who, it is said, decided to construct this magnificent hotel when he was barred from entering the "Whites Only" Watsons Hotel. The Taj, with its splendid Moorish arches and columns, majestic stairways and galleries, remains one of Asia's grandest hotels, while Watsons is now a dilapidated building, the hotel having closed down long ago.

The eastern sea face stretching in front of the Gateway of India is Mumbai's favourite promenade. Called **Apollo Bunder**, it was once the traditional dockyard of the local Kol fisherman, the island's original inhabitants. Today, snake charmers and performing monkeys, astrologers and ear-cleaners jostle for business among the strollers. Dozens of yachts, fishing boats and ferries are moored in the waters beyond.



The Royal Bombay Yacht Club, a relic of the British Raj



The entrance to Cusrow Baug, a Parsi enclave along Colaba

Wellington Fountain ②

Bounded by MG Rd, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Chhatrapati Shivaji Marg & Madame Cama Rd

Built to commemorate the Duke of Wellington's visit to Bombay in 1819, Wellington Fountain (now renamed Shriyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk) is encircled by some magnificent colonial buildings. These include the old **Majestic Hotel** (now the government-owned Sahakar Bhandar) with its mock minarets and Gujarati balconies, and the elegant Art Deco **Regal Cinema**, designed by Charles Stevens and completed in 1934. His father, Frederick William Stevens, designed the imposing grey stone Indo-Gothic **Sailors' Home**, with a bas-relief of Neptune on its front gable, in 1876; it is now the Police Headquarters. Equally impressive are the Edwardian Cowasjee Jehangir Hall, now the **National Gallery of Modern Art** (see p449), and

the Indo-Saracenic **Prince of Wales Museum** (see pp450–51). Adjoining it is Hornbill House, the headquarters of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), a prestigious institution established in 1883.

Colaba Causeway ③

Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg **Afghan Memorial Church** ☐ daily ⓘ
7am & 4.30pm, Sun.

Constructed by the British in 1838, Colaba Causeway helped integrate the main city with Colaba, its southernmost spur. Today, the Causeway, also known as Shahid Bhagat Singh Road (see p456), is a lively mix of shops, restaurants and residential enclaves. Among them is the charming Parsi housing colony of **Cusrow Baug**, built in the 1930s, where the distinct culture and lifestyle of this dwindling community is preserved. Of the Causeway's many restaurants is one that has become an institution, the **Leopold Café and Bar** (see

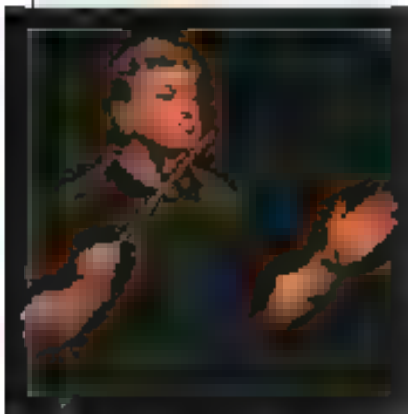
p735), established in 1871 and a popular meeting place ever since. Further south are the **Sassoon Docks**, worth visiting early in the morning when they are buzzing with activity. This is when the fishermen bring in their catch and a wholesale fish market is set up by the lively, sharp-tongued Koli fishwives.

At the southern end of Colaba is the **Afghan Memorial Church of St John the Evangelist**, built between 1847 and 1858 (see p21). This grand Neo-Classical structure, with its tall spire and imposing front porch in buff basalt stone, was built in memory of the soldiers who died in the First Afghan War (1843), and the church is full of poignant memorial stones. It has superb stained glass, especially on its west windows, where an outstanding panel depicts the Crucifixion. A memorial to the martyrs stands in the garden.



Fishermen bringing in the day's catch at Sassoon Docks

THE PARSİ COMMUNITY IN MUMBAI



Conductor Zubin Mehta, a Mumbai-born Parsi

Mumbai's cosmopolitan, progressive culture owes a great deal to the contribution of the Parsi community. Originally from Iran where they followed the ancient Zoroastrian faith, they migrated to India in the 9th century AD when the advent of Islam brought with it the religious persecution of Zoroastrians. They settled along the west coast of Gujarat, absorbing many local traditions, and later moved to Mumbai, where they made their name as brilliant financiers and traders. Often, they adopted the name of their trade, and so one finds Parsi surnames such as Mistry (mason) and Vakil (lawyer), or even Readymoney! A wealthy and talented community that has produced several leading industrial houses, such as the Tatas and the Godres, Parsis are also renowned for their philanthropy and have founded several cultural, educational and medical institutions in Mumbai.

Street-by-Street: Kala Ghoda ⑨



Detail, Clock Tower

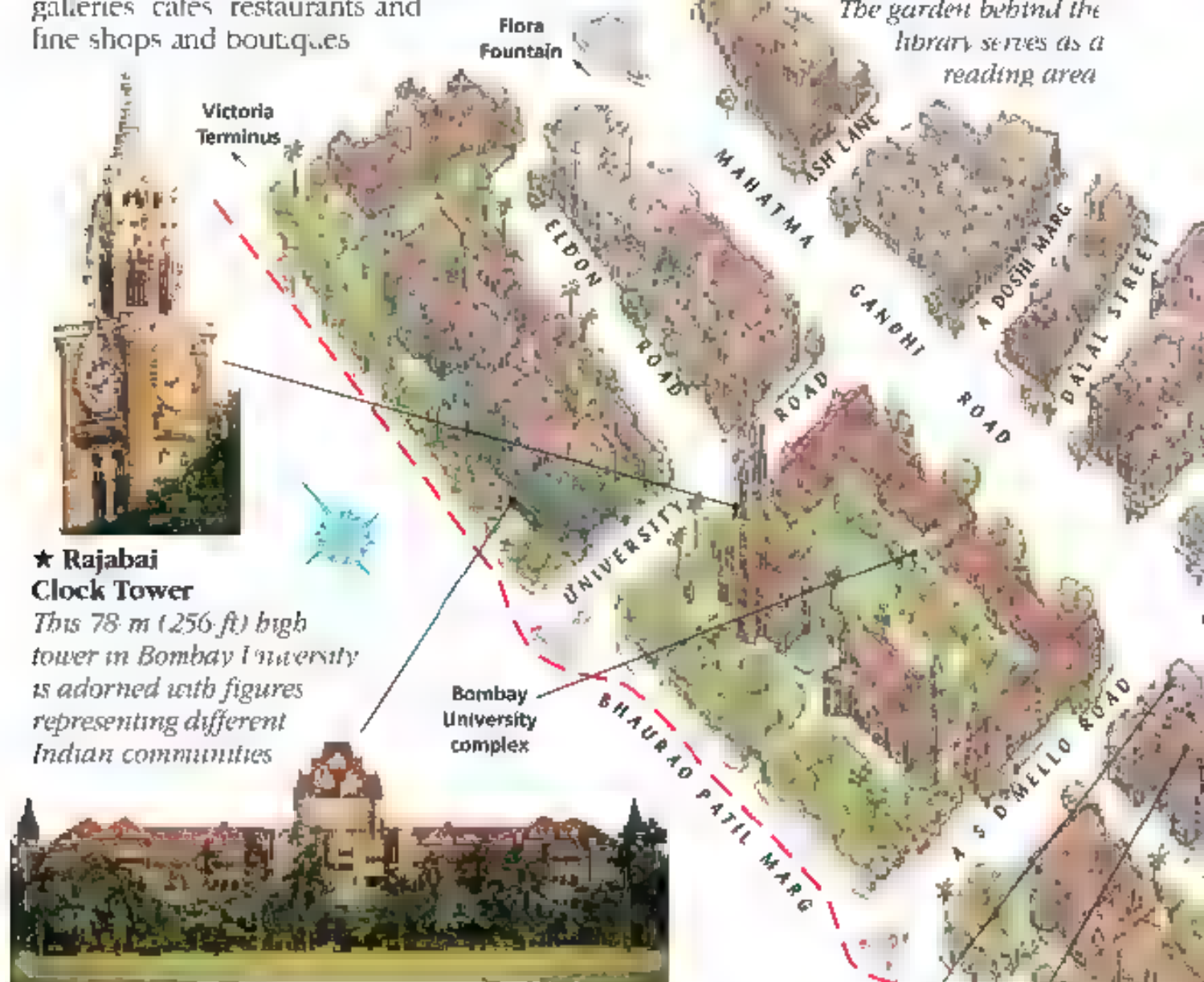
Kala Ghoda or "Black Horse", takes its name from an equestrian statue of King Edward VII that once stood at the intersection of Mahatma Gandhi Road and K Dabash Marg. The statue has long since been removed, but the name persists in public memory. Stretching from Wellington Fountain at the southern end of Mahatma Gandhi Road, to Bombay University at the north, and flanked by the Oval Maidan and the naval base at Lon Gate, this historic area is a hub of cultural

activity. It also houses a number of art galleries, cafés, restaurants and fine shops and boutiques.



David Sassoon Library

The garden behind the library serves as a reading area.



★ Rajabai Clock Tower

This 78 m (256 ft) high tower in Bombay University is adorned with figures representing different Indian communities.

★ High Court

This fortress-like building, the second largest public building in the city, has a grand central staircase, well-appointed court rooms, and a large library.

Esplanade Mansion

Formerly Watsons Hotel, witnessed the city's first motion picture in 1896.

Old Secretariat

STAR SIGHTS

★ Rajabai Clock Tower

★ High Court

★ Prince of Wales Museum

Army & Navy Building

The Neo-Classical Army & Navy Building, a departmental store in the early 1900s, is home to several offices of the Tata Group.

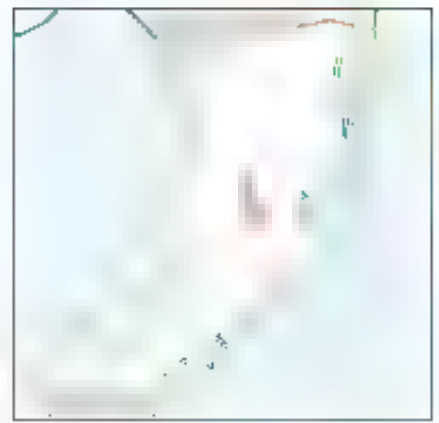




Kenneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue

This is the oldest Sephardic synagogue in the city donated by the Sassoon family. It is used for prayer by Mumbai's Baghdadi and Bene Israeli Jewish community.

0 metres 50
0 yards 50



LOCATOR MAP

See Mumbai Map pp444-5

KEY

— Suggested route

Elphinstone College

Part of this delightful Venetian Gothic building houses the State Archives



Kenneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue

DUBASH MARG

Lion Gate

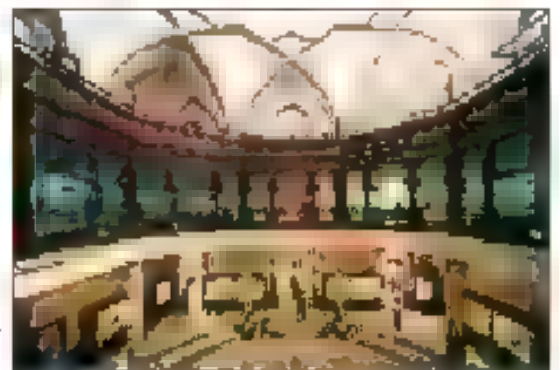
Hornbill House

Police Headquarters

Wellington Fountain

★ Prince of Wales Museum

Mumbai's most prestigious museum has a good collection of Rajput miniatures and sculptures see pp450-51.



The National Gallery of Modern Art an Edwardian building, has the most impressive exhibition space in Mumbai.

Gateway of India

Regal Cinema

Jehangir Art Gallery

This gallery exhibits paintings by leading contemporary Indian artists, and also has a popular cafe

David Sassoon Library



The Prince of Wales Museum ⑤



Damascened sword,
Mysore, 1732

Especially renowned for its superb sculptures and miniature paintings, the Prince of Wales Museum's exhibits are housed in a grand Indo-Saracenic building, designed by George Wittet. Its foundation stone was laid by the Prince of Wales (the future George V) in 1905. During World War I, it served as a military hospital, and was formally inaugurated in 1923. Generous gifts from discerning private collectors have enabled the museum to build a collection of rare quality.

Japanese Cloisonné
This 19th century vase forms part of an impressive collection of far Eastern art



Ivory Statuette
A Parsi girl, *Bai Atma* Wadia is depicted in traditional dress in this 19th-century piece from the Decorative Arts gallery.

Arms and Armour include the finely decorated swords and shields of the Mughal emperors



★ **Jahangir Giving Alms**
This early 17th-century Mughal miniature shows Jahangir giving alms to Sufi mendicants at the Dargah Sharif in Ajmer. The gallery has over 200 miniatures.

KEY TO FLOORPLAN

- ☐ Pre- and Proto-History Gallery
- ☐ Key Gallery
- ☐ Indian Sculpture
- ☐ Natural History Section
- ☐ Decorative Arts
- ☐ Miniature Paintings
- ☐ Bronzes
- ☐ Nepalese and Tibetan Art
- ☐ Maritime History
- ☐ European Paintings
- ☐ Far Eastern Art
- ☐ Arms and Armour
- ☒ Premchand Roychand Gallery

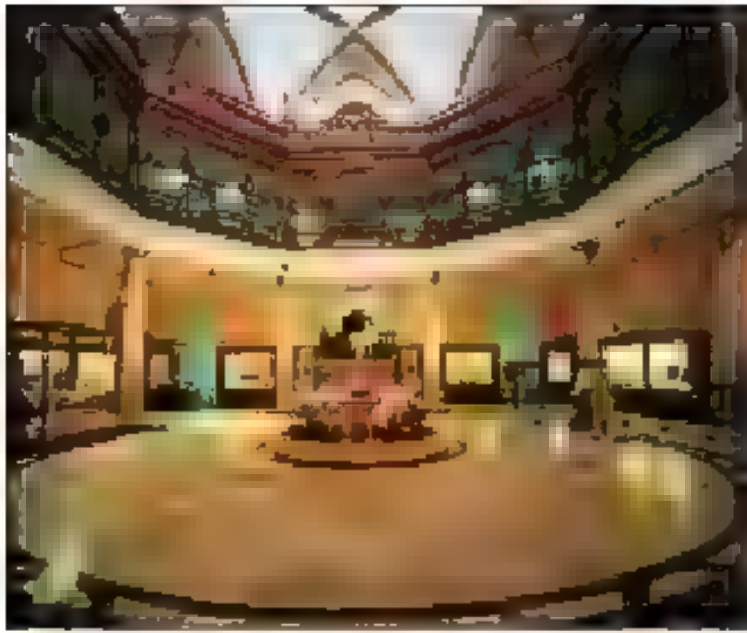
STAR EXHIBITS

- ★ Jahangir Giving Alms
- ★ Maitreya Buddha
- ★ Gandhara Sculpture

The Coomaraswamy Hall hosts seminars and temporary exhibitions

GALLERY GUIDE

The museum, now re-named the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, has galleries on three floors. The ground floor houses sculpture (including Gandhara masterpieces), the Pre- and Proto-History Gallery and the Natural History Section. On the first floor are miniature paintings, decorative arts, Nepalese and Tibetan Art, and the newly opened Premchand Roychand Galleries. The second floor has European paintings, arms and armour.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

MG Rd, Fort Area **Tel** (022) 2284 4519. ☐ Tue-Sun. ☒ Students with an International ID card get a discount.   

Key Gallery

The central hall on the ground floor offers a sampling of the museum's treasures, with prize exhibits from different galleries

★ Maitreya Buddha

An outstanding example of Nepalese art, this 12th-century gilt bronze statue of the Future Buddha was, like most of the museum's prized pieces, a gift from a private collector



First floor

Karl Khandalvala Gallery

Ground floor

★ Gandhara Sculpture

This 3rd century AD sculpture of the Buddha meeting an ascetic shows strong Greek influence



Entrance



The Town Hall, Mumbai's most elegant public building

Town Hall 6

Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Fort Area

Tel (022) 2266 0956 ☐ Mon–Sat

☑ public hols. **The Asiatic Society**

Tel (022) 2266 0956 ☐ Mon–Sat

In recognition of Mumbai's importance as a burgeoning commercial centre in the 19th century, the city was bestowed with a Town Hall facing the vast open space of Cotton Green (now Horniman Circle). Designed by Colonel Thomas Cowper and completed in 1833, the Town Hall is considered to be among the finest Neo-Classical buildings in India, and is one of the earliest surviving colonial buildings in Mumbai. Its impressive façade of pedimented porticoes surmounts a row of fluted Doric columns, which were shipped out from England. A grand flight of steps leads into a magnificent Assembly Hall, the venue for public meetings during the Raj.

The Town Hall's north wing houses **The Asiatic Society** founded in 1804, with its imposing high ceiling, teak-panelled walls, and elegant cast iron balustrades. This institution's extensive library has a priceless collection of 800,000 volumes, including a first edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, ancient Sanskrit manuscripts and old Bombay gazetteers. On the first floor are marble statues of Mumbai's founding fathers, among them two governors Mountstuart Elphinstone and Sir Bartle Frere, and the Parsi philanthropist, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy.

Horniman Circle 7

Jeejeebhoy Nanaman Rd, Fort Area

St Thomas' Cathedral Tel (022)

2202 0121 ☐ daily ☑ 8am &

4:30pm, Sun

The central green, the old Cotton Green where traders used to buy and sell bales of cotton, was laid out as a public garden in 1869. Later known as Elphinstone Circle, it was renamed after Independence in honour of Benjamin Guy Horniman, a former editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* who was an active supporter of India's Freedom Movement. Today the garden remains a delightful spot, much frequented by students and office workers who relax here before the long commute back to their homes in the distant suburbs. The garden is also the venue for

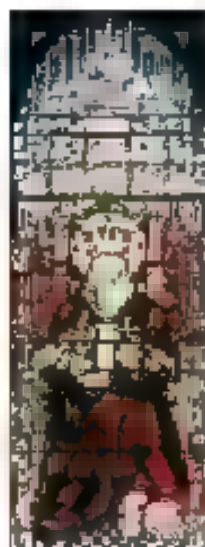


Greek-inspired keystone at Horniman Circle

open-air theatrical performances and cultural events in the winter.

The elegant circle of Neo-Classical buildings around the garden was built in the 1860s, and fashioned after acclaimed English examples such as Bath Crescent and Tunbridge Wells. Designed by James Scott, the buildings around the garden share a uniform façade with pedestrian arcades and decorative terracotta keystones from England, and represent the earliest planned urban compositions in Mumbai.

Anchoring the western edge of the flower-filled green patch of Horniman Circle is **St Thomas' Cathedral**, the city's oldest church, which was consecrated in 1718. Like many of Mumbai's great edifices, this too was funded



Stained glass, St Thomas' Cathedral

by public donations, collected in large part by a young East India Company chaplain named Richard Cobbe. The church has an imposing bell tower and flying buttresses, and some fine 19th-century stained glass. The cathedral's spacious interior is especially remarkable for its splendid marble memorials to heroes of the Raj. An exceptionally fine one is the monument to Governor Duncan

which depicts him being blessed by Hindus for his efforts to stop infanticide. In front of the entrance porch is a charming Neo-Gothic fountain. Designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, it was donated by the Parsi financier Sir Cowasjee Ready money.

Opposite the Cathedral are some lovely buildings – the Neo-Gothic **Elphinstone Building**, built in the late 19th century, and the Neo-Classical **British Bank of the Middle East**. Across the road is the **Ready-money Mansion** with its detailed timberwork, carved balconies, and Mughal arches. Reminiscent of a Rajasthan *haveli*, it was also designed by George Wittet (see p456).



The Mumbai Stock Exchange.
India's financial epicentre

Mumbai Stock Exchange 8

Dalal Street, Fort Area  to public

India's financial epicentre, the **Mumbai Stock Exchange** towers above Dalal Street. This is Mumbai's Wall Street and derives its name from the many stockbrokers (*dalals*) in the area. The presence of close to 50 banks on a short stretch underlines the frenetic pace of its commercial activity. Just before lunchtime, the area swarms with *dabbawallahs* (see p457) who bring home-made lunchboxes to the thousands of office workers in the area.

Flora Fountain 9

Junction of Veer Nariman Rd, MG Rd & Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Rd, Fort Area

Standing at the intersection of three major streets is **Flora Fountain**, the quintessential icon of Mumbai. Crafted out of Portland stone and shipped out from England, the fountain is surmounted by the Roman goddess Flora who stands above exuberantly carved seashells, dolphins and mythical beasts. Erected in 1869 in what was then a spacious open plaza, Flora Fountain is now swamped in a sea of traffic and overshadowed by a **Martyrs' Memorial** put up by the Maharashtra state government in 1960. The area has now been renamed Hutatma

Chowk ("Martyrs' Square"). This area marks the western ramparts of the now vanished old Fort, built by the East India Company in 1716, which covered the southern part of the city. The Fort was demolished in the 1860s by the governor, Sir Bartle Frere, to allow the city to expand, and to accommodate the grandiose new civic and commercial buildings he had planned. All these buildings were designed with pedestrian arcades, which today are crowded with hawkers selling a wide range of goods, from old books to clothes and electronic gadgets.

North of Flora Fountain, leading towards Victoria Terminus, is Dadabhai Naoroji (DN) Road, lined with some magnificent Victorian and later colonial structures such as the **Capitol Cinema** with its classical detailing, the **JN Petit Institute and Library** (1898) with its Venetian Neo-Gothic façade, and the Art Deco **Wacha Agiary** (Parsi Fire Temple) with its Assyrian-style carvings, built in 1881. Other interesting structures include the Indo-Saracenic **Times of India Building** and the fanciful **Municipal Corporation Building** with its Islamic minarets, Gothic towers and onion domes.

Victoria Terminus 10

See pp454-5

Crawford Market 11

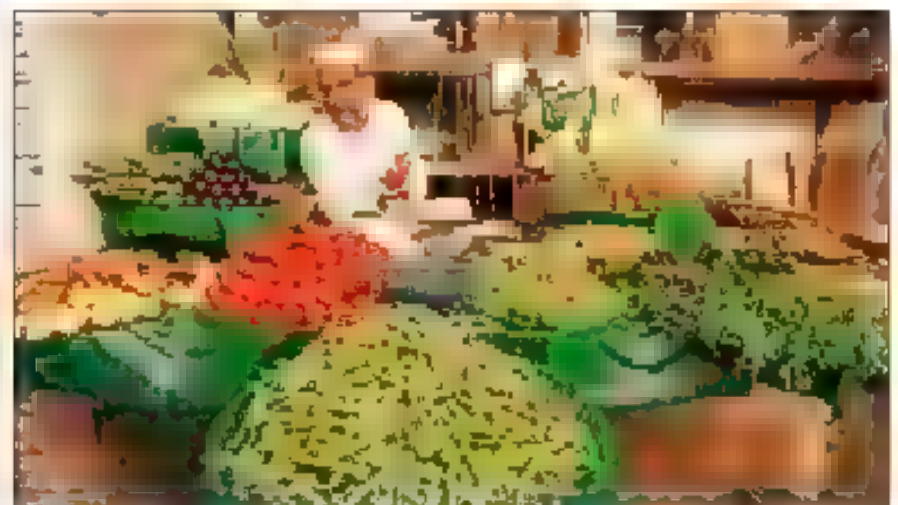
Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Rd & Lokmanya Tilak Rd **Shops**  daily

One of Mumbai's most fascinating and lively areas, Crawford Market, now renamed Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Market, lies to the north of Victoria Terminus. Designed by William Emerson and completed in 1869, this architectural extravaganza of Moorish arches and half-timbered gables, topped by a clocktower, consists of a large central hall, with two wings. Tiers of wooden stalls display nearly 3,000 tonnes of fresh produce daily, from fruit and flowers to fish and exotic birds. The floor is paved with stone from Caithness in Scotland, which remains cool through the day. The lamps are shaped like winged dragons. Above the entrance doors, the charming marble bas-reliefs depict scenes from market life. They were carved by Lockwood Kipping (see p110), father of the writer Rudyard Kipping, as was the fountain in the courtyard, exuberantly decorated with Hindu river goddesses and animals.

Just west of Crawford Market is **Zaveri Bazaar** where diamond, gold and silver merchants have their opulent stores. Northwest of Crawford Market, on Mutton Street, is **Chor Bazaar** ("Thieves Market"), with its fascinating antique and bric-a-brac shops.



Flora Fountain, a favourite
Mumbai landmark



Vegetable stall at Crawford Market

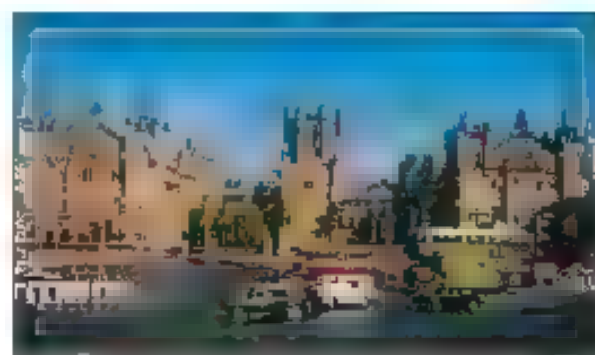
Victoria Terminus 10



Central Railway emblem on the gate

The most impressive example of Victorian Gothic architecture in India, Victoria Terminus Railway Station (now renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus) is a rich extravaganza of domes, spires and arches. Designed by Frederick William Stevens

and decorated by local art students and craftsmen, it was completed in 1888 and named to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Now the headquarters of the Central Railway, over 1,000 trains and two million passengers, including crowds of suburban commuters, pass through the station daily. In 2004, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

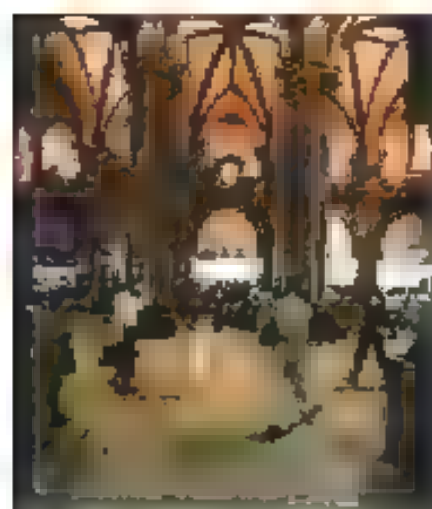


Victoria Terminus, often mistaken for a grand palace or cathedral



The Gables

The gables are crowned by sculptures representing Engineering, Agriculture and Commerce.



★ Booking Hall

A Neo-Gothic vaulted roof with wooden ribs covers the hall. Stained glass, colourful tiles and decorative iron grilles add to its beauty.



Entrance




The entrance gate piers are topped by stone sculptures of a lion and a tiger, symbolizing Britain and India respectively.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Booking Hall
- ★ Stone Carvings and Sculptures

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Rd, Fort Area. Tel (022) 2264 6464

☑ of the interiors   

The Central Dome

A 4-m (13 ft) high statue of "Progress", holding a torch, crowns the colossal dome, which has eight decorated ribs



A majestic staircase of blue stone with beautiful iron railings sweeps up beneath the dome

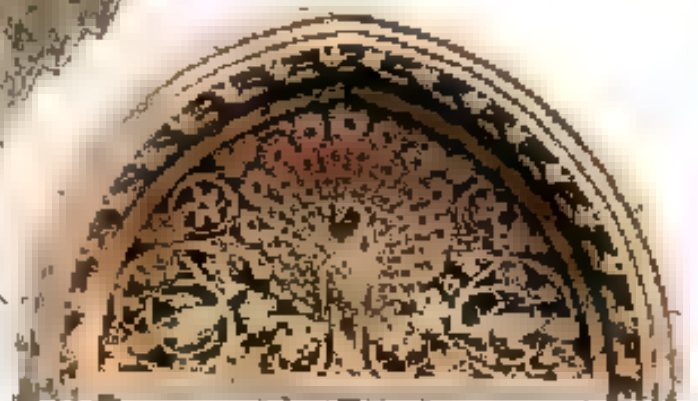
Water spouts shaped like animal heads jut out from the base of the dome

**Stained Glass**

Set into the octagonal tower below the dome are brilliantly coloured stained-glass windows, decorated with a locomotive and foliage

**Portrait Medallion**

Studded into the façade are busts of Raj-era personalities, such as Sir Bartle Frere (see p452)

**★ Stone Carvings and Sculptures**

An exquisite peacock carving decorates this window. Other carved screens and friezes feature elephants, monkeys and snakes



The Ruttonsee Mulji fountain, elaborately carved and embellished

Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg ⑫

Fort Area

This busy street, also known as Colaba Causeway (see pp447) towards its southern end, is the bustling commercial and administrative hub of the so-called Fort area (see pp453). Virtually no traces of this historic structure remain but the area still offers a fascinating glimpse into the continuities between colonial and present-day Mumbai.

The **Reserve Bank of India**, which stands on the site of an old military barracks, is India's leading banking institution. Built in 1939 and designed by JA Ritchie, its grand Art Deco entrance, flanked by two impressive columns, enhances its air of respectable solidity. There are attractive cast iron grilles in the window panels. The new high-rise offices of the Reserve Bank, across the road, stand in the grounds of the old **Mint**. This is a majestic Classical-fronted building, built in 1817 by Major John Hawkins, a member of the Bombay Engineers Regiment. Entry into the Mint is restricted, but visible from its compound is a stone gateway erected by the Portuguese, now inside the naval establishment, **INS Angre**.

West of the Mint, occupying a corner site at the intersection of Pherozeshah Mehta and Shahid Bhagat Singh roads, is

the imposing **Gresham Assurance Building**. This Art Deco structure has an impressive basalt façade, with two grand pillars and a dome.

The **Marshall Building** directly opposite, has a Florentine dome and was constructed in 1898 to accommodate the warehouse and offices of a British engineering firm. Its façade, embellished with a medley of angels, portholes and pendants, is a wonderful example of how contemporary European architecture was successfully transplanted to eastern settings.

Drinking water fountains or *pravs* were set up across the city by local philanthropists to provide respite from the hot Indian summer.

At the point where Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg meets Mint Road is the **Ruttonsee Mulji Drinking Water Fountain**, designed by FW Stevens, the leading architect of Victorian Bombay, who also designed the Municipal Corporation Building and the Victoria Terminus (see pp454–5). This fountain was erected in 1894 by a local trader in memory of his only son, whose statue stands

beneath the dome. Made of limestone and red and blue granite, it is decorated with projecting elephant heads, whose trunks spout water. The dome, supported by columns made of blue granite, is crowned by the figure of a young boy. The fountain also has a special trough from which animals can drink.

Further down Mint Road, just before its junction with Wachand Hirachand Marg, is another *prav* and the **Kothari Kabutarkhana**. Literally "Pigeon House", the Kabutarkhana is an ornate

stone structure, constructed in the 18th century by a Jain merchant, Parushottamdas Kothari, and added to in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Jains, like Buddhists, believe that all living beings have souls, and that kind acts towards all life forms will earn the giver merit in the next life.

At the western end of Wachand Hirachand Marg is **Nagar Chowk**, an oasis of green in the midst of swirling traffic. It has an impressive statue of Sir Dinshaw Manekji Petit, a baronet, captain of industry and leading Parsi philanthropist of the early 20th century. The statue was sculpted by Sir Thomas

Brock and the surrounding garden is a good place from which to view

some of Mumbai's grand Victorian buildings – among them Victoria Terminus, the Bombay Municipal Corporation building and the General Post Office. Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg eventually runs into D'Mello Road, formerly known

as Frere Road. This area lay under water until the 1840s when it was reclaimed by the Port Trust. Today the road is lined with popular eateries.



Gresham Assurance Building



Pigeons at the Kothari Kabutarkhana pecking at their daily supply of grain

Ballard Estate ③

Bounded by Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Walchand Hirachand Marg & Shoorji Varadadas Marg.

This entire area was once part of the sea until it was reclaimed by the Bombay Port Trust and converted into a business district. Planned between 1908 and 1914 by George Wittet, architect of the Gateway of India, the area was developed according to the strict guidelines he set: maintaining a restrained elegance in contrast to the over-ornamentation of the Victorian edifices in the Fort area. The district's broad pavements and neat tree-lined avenues are lined with stone buildings of uniform height and style, giving the Estate an atmosphere of calm tranquility unusual in a business quarter.

A convenient point of entry into Ballard Estate is from Shoorji Varadadas Marg, near the imposing Marshall Building. Among the most impressive buildings on this street is the **Customs House**. Designed by Wittet himself, it has a grand entrance portico in stately Renaissance style, framed by two columns rising to the height of the building. Next to it is the **Bombay Port Trust**, also designed by George



The General Post Office, combining European and Indian styles

Wittet. Two striking slabs of basalt are sculpted on its facade. Further down the road, to the east, is the **Port Trust War Memorial** honouring the memory of port officers who died in World War I. The memorial has a single fluted column shaft in stone surmounted by a lantern. The **Grand Hotel** dominates the corner of Walchand Hirachand Marg and Ram Chlam Marg. Another of George Wittet's designs, it has a striking central atrium. The grandiose **Mackinnon & Mackenzie Building** has an impressive portico with columns and statues. This and other beautiful Edwardian buildings, such as **Darabshaw House** and **Neville House**, make Ballard Estate a uniquely elegant business district.



Port Trust Memorial

General Post Office ④

Walchand Hirachand Marg
☐ Mon-Sat

Completed in 1911, this fantastic composition of minarets, domes and arches was designed by John Begg and supervised by George Wittet. A prime example of the Indo-Saracenic style, the General Post Office (GPO) building combines elements of Indian architecture, most notably an Islamic dome inspired by the Goli Cemetery in Jaipur (see p545), with classical European traditions. Mumbai's main post office, the GPO has a lofty three-storeyed rotunda inside, which leads to its various departments. Business is transacted from behind delightful old-fashioned wooden counters.

THE DABBAWALLAHS OF MUMBAI

Among Mumbai's most characteristic sights are the *dabbawallahs*, men who pick up freshly cooked lunches from over 100,000 suburban homes and deliver them to offices all over the city. Most office workers spend an average of two hours traveling to work. Hot, home-cooked lunches therefore would normally be an impossible luxury – if it weren't for the *dabbawallahs*. They pick up the meals, usually *rotis*, vegetables and *dal*, packed in three or four round stainless steel containers, known as tiffin boxes or *dabbas* (hence the name *dabbawallahs*) from each house, code the office addresses onto the lids, thread the *dabbas* onto long poles and cycle off to the nearest station. Here the *dabbas* are handed over to other *dabbawallahs* who deliver them to the right offices. Lunches rarely go astray, and empty *dabbas* are delivered back home by late afternoon. *Dabbawallahs*, traditionally migrants from the neighbouring city of Pune, are organized under the Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Association. They provide one of Mumbai's most efficient services.



Dabbawallahs delivering home-cooked lunch to office workers



Marine Drive, sweeping in an arc along the sea, connecting the northern and southern ends of Mumbai

Marine Drive 15

Netaji Subhash Chandra Rd

Known as the "Queen's Necklace" after the glittering string of streetlights lining the road, Marine Drive (renamed Netaji Subhash Chandra Road) sweeps along a sea-facing promenade which runs from **Nariman Point** to **Malabar Hill**. Built on land reclaimed from the sea in the 1920s, it is also the main arterial link between the suburbs and the city's prime commercial and administrative centres, Nariman Point and the Fort area (see p453). Situated at its eastern periphery is the **Oval Maidan**, nursery of such modern-day Indian cricketing heroes as Sachin Tendulkar (b.1973) and Sunil Gavaskar (b.1949).

The buildings of Marine Drive are characterized by a strong Art Deco flavour popular in Mumbai during the 1930s and 1940s. With the advent of electric elevators and with concrete replacing the earlier stone and brick, the apartment blocks on the sea front were built to a uniform height of five floors, making this the most fashionable residential area of the time.

The best way to enjoy Marine Drive during the day is from the upper floor of a red double-decker bus, which provides panoramic views of the sea and the city's skyline. In the evening, it swarms with people taking their daily walks, couples meeting after work and families gathering around the vendors selling coconut water and *bhelpur*

(see p441). **Chowpatty Beach** is the city's most popular promenade and the southernmost of Mumbai's beaches. Earlier cluttered with food stalls and hawkers, the area has now been substantially cleaned up in a drive by the civic authorities. An inexpensive evening destination for the city's residents, it remains lively till late at night. It is also the venue for Mumbai's largest festival, **Ganesha Chaturthi** (see p467), when huge crowds gather at Chowpatty Beach to immerse images of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, in the Arabian Sea.

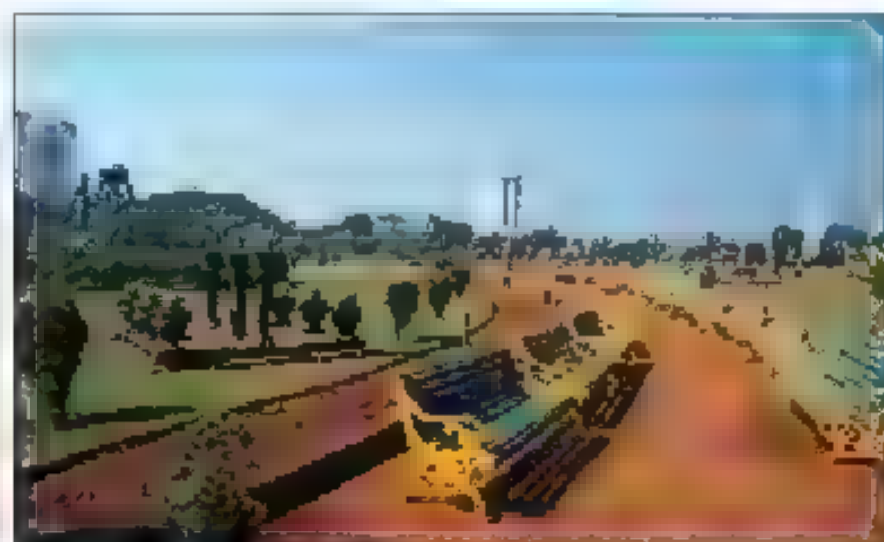
The **National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA)** at the southern tip of Marine Drive, is the city's most active venue for music, dance and theatre performances. Its Tata Theatre and Experimental Theatre stage works by international and Indian playwrights with the best of local talent, while India's finest musicians and dancers perform regularly in its other auditoriums (see pp462-3).

Malabar Hill 16

Bounded by Napean Sea Rd, Ridge Rd & Walkeshwar Rd

This leafy residential area, once dotted with bungalows set in large, forested compounds, is today crowded with high-rise apartment blocks home to Mumbai's rich and famous. The **Parsi Towers of Silence** are also located in this area. Parsis (see p447), who believe that the elements of earth, water, air and fire are sacred and should not be defiled, place their dead in these tall, cylindrical stone towers to be picked clean by vultures. This, they believe, is one of the most environmentally friendly ways of disposing of the dead. A fall in Mumbai's vulture population, however, remains a cause of worry. A high wall and a thick belt of trees surround the Towers, which are closed to visitors.

The **Hanging Gardens** provide a pleasant open space in the vicinity, with good views of the city.



The Hanging Gardens, rising in tiers on Malabar Hill

Banganga 17

Walkeshwar, Malabar Hill.

Hidden amidst the soaring skyscrapers of Malabar Hill is the small settlement of Banganga, set around a sacred tank. According to legend, Rama, hero of the *Ramayana* (see p27), pausing here while on his way to rescue his abducted wife Sita, shot an arrow into the ground and a spring gushed forth. This is the origin of the tank, and devotees take regular ritual dips in it. The site has several temples – the **Jabreshwar Mahadeo** at the tank's corner is the prettiest, while the **Walkeshwar Temple**, built in the 18th century, has a linga said to have been built by Rama himself. Around the tank and temples are rest houses (*dharamsalas*) for pilgrims



Khotachiwadi's narrow lanes and balconied houses

Khotachiwadi 18

Bounded by Jagannath Shankarshet Rd & Raja Ram Mohan Roy Rd, Girgaum

In the narrow bylanes of Girgaum in central Mumbai is the old-fashioned neighbourhood of Khotachiwadi (literally, "Headman's Orchard"). Khotachiwadi grew as a suburban settlement north of the Fort, in the 19th century, and retains the sleepy quality of a coastal village. The low tile-roofed cottages have timber eaves and open verandahs with cast-iron balconies, the focal



The Mahalaxmi Temple, dedicated to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth

point for most daytime activities. The inhabitants were converted to Christianity by Portuguese missionaries and adopted names such as Fernandes, D Costa and D Lima. Anant Ashram, a tiny eatery in Khotachiwadi's bylanes, serves excellent prawn curry and rice

Mahalaxmi Temple 19

Mahalaxmi Temple Lane, off Bhulabhai Desai Rd

Devotees, both rich and poor, throng this temple dedicated to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity, who is also known as Laxmi in Maharashtra and in parts of Gujarat (see p419). The approach is lined with stalls selling religious offerings, such as coconuts, flowers and small plastic icons. The temple's history dates to the 18th century when an embankment being constructed along the bay was repeatedly washed away. The contractor dreamt that if a temple was built to Laxmi, the wall would hold. And this

actually happened. Nearby is the **Mahalaxmi Race Course** next to Mahalaxmi Station, which has horse races every weekend from November to April. In its crowded stands the city's fashionable set rub shoulders with the poor and hopeful

Haji Ali Mosque 20

Off Lala Lajpat Rai Marg

Approached by a long causeway which gets submerged at high tide, is the *dargah* (tomb) of a rich merchant, Hajj Ali Shah Bukhari, who gave up his wealth after a pilgrimage to Mecca. The *dargah* dates to the 15th century, but the dazzling white mosque was built in the 1940s and seems to float on its small island in the Arabian Sea. The causeway, usually lined with beggars, leads to a huge marble courtyard. The tomb lies at its centre and devotees touch their heads to the heavily embroidered *chador* (ceremonial cloth) covering it. Female devotees sit behind a *jali* (stone screen)



Haji Ali Mosque, built on an island linked to the shore by a causeway

Bandra 21

N of Mahim Bay **Mount St Mary Basilica** Mount Mary Rd
Tel (022) 2642 3152 ☐ daily
 ☑ *Bandra fête* (Sep.)

The prosperous suburb of Bandra, in the north of Mumbai, is connected to the city by the Mahim Causeway. Amongst its new apartment blocks, swanky boutiques and restaurants, are vestiges of its past as a small Portuguese enclave. The quiet lanes with tile-roofed bungalows are inhabited by a community of local East Indian Christians, whose ancestors were converted by the Portuguese. A number of Roman Catholic churches, too, were built by the Portuguese, who retained Bandra until the late 18th century. The most important of these is the **Mount St Mary Basilica**, which attracts devotees of all faiths. Outside the church is a bizarre market selling wax models of various body parts. Devotees with ailing limbs buy the appropriate model and solemnly place it on the altar before the Virgin Mary in the belief that she will effect a miraculous cure. A deserted Portuguese fort, **Castella de Aguada**, on a hill, offers spectacular views of the sea and the hinterland.

Bandra's plush **Pali Hill** locality, which has the villas of several Bollywood stars, draws crowds of star-struck Indian tourists. Its other attractions are the seafront promenades at **Bandstand** and **Carter Road**, especially popular with the local youth. Also situated here is a small Koli fishing village.



A green coconut vendor on Mumbai's crowded Juhu Beach

Juhu Beach 22

N of Bandra

The sandy coastline of Juhu Beach lies north of the city centre. This is not a beach for leisurely sunbathing, though since it is always crowded. On weekends, especially, it is packed with families of picnickers playing cricket on the beach, paddling tentatively in the water and enjoying the sea breeze. Crowds of vendors offering snacks, toys and fair-ground rides add to the *mela* (fair) atmosphere. Juhu also has several luxury hotels that serve as weekend retreats for Mumbai's tycoons and Bollywood film stars.

The **Prithvi Theatre**, on Juhu Church Road, was founded in 1978 by one of Bollywood's leading families, the Kapoors. It stages plays in Hindi, Gujarati and English and has a lively café, popular with Mumbai's arty crowd. A theatre festival is held in November (see p462).

Film City 23

Goregaon East **Contact Film City's Public Relations Office** (022) 2840 1533

Built in 1978 to meet the needs of Mumbai's booming Hindi film industry, better known as Bollywood (see pp32-3), Film City sprawls over 40 ha (346 acres) in the city's northern outskirts. Bollywood produces some 120 feature films a year, making it the world's largest film industry, rivalled only by South India's Telugu and Tamil film industries. Film City is where many Bollywood blockbusters are shot, as are most TV soaps and serials. Song-and-dance routines, scenes of tear-jerking melodrama and action-packed fight sequences take place simultaneously on Film City's dozen shooting stages, against outsize backdrops of medieval forts, dense jungles and opulent card-board palaces. In between takes, mythological heroes rub shoulders with rifle-toting bandits and skimpily clad vamps.

Sanjay Gandhi National Park 24

Borivili **Conservation Education Centre**, near elephant gate Goregaon, (022) 2842 1174. ☐ Tue-Sun 10-5
 ☑ **Kanheri Caves** ☐ Tue-Sun 10-5

An hour's train ride north of Mumbai, this national park is one of the few in India within the limits of a city. Surrounded by rolling hills, its deciduous forests harbour a wealth of birdlife and fauna, wild boar, cobras, as well as the occasional tiger. Tiger and Lion Safaris are offered in fenced-off sections of the park.

In a picturesque wooded area of the park is an extraordinary complex of 109 Buddhist caves, the **Kanheri Caves**, dating from the 2nd to the 9th centuries AD. The 6th-century **Cave 3** is the most impressive, with its colossal Buddhas, richly carved pillars and brackets and hemispherical stupas. The caves are best approached through the Park's northern entrance.



A film shoot in progress at Film City, Goregaon

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp706-8 and pp734-5

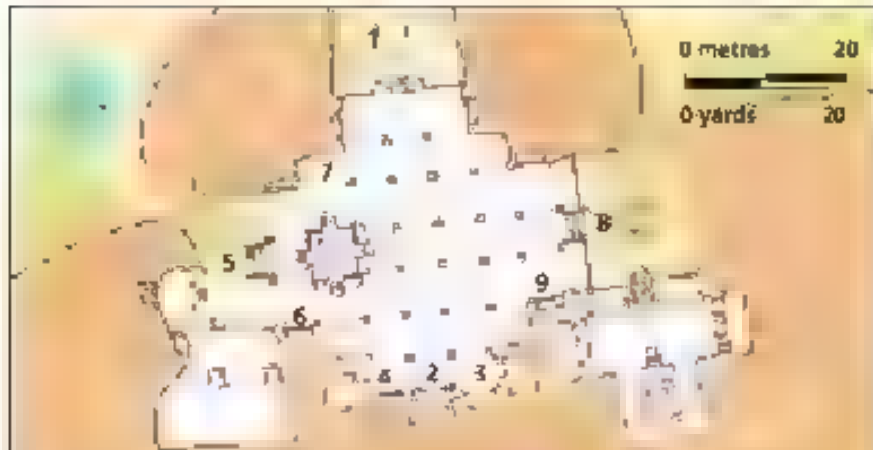
Elephanta Island 25



Shiva and Parvati,
carved in stone

Located on an island off Mumbai's eastern shore, the 6th-century AD Elephanta cave temples, chiselled into a rocky cliff and dedicated to Shiva, contain some great masterpieces of Indian sculpture. Originally called Gharapuri or "Fort City", the island was renamed Elephanta by the Portuguese after a huge stone elephant that once stood here. This is now in the garden of the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai's Byculla area. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Elephanta cave temples can be visited on a day trip by boat from Mumbai.

This is now in the garden of the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai's Byculla area. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Elephanta cave temples can be visited on a day trip by boat from Mumbai.



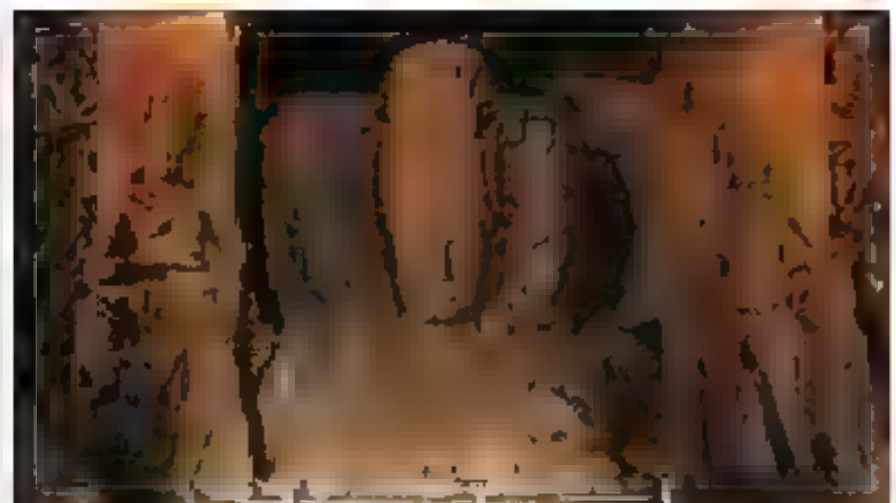
PLAN OF ELEPHANTA CAVES

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Northern Entrance | 6 Marriage of Shiva-Parvati |
| 2 Mahesamurti | 7 Shiva spearing Andhaka |
| 3 Ardhanarishvara | 8 Eastern Entrance |
| 4 Gangadhara | 9 Shiva and Parvati Playing Dice |
| 5 Western Entrance | |

Exploring Elephanta

The origins of the cave temples at Elephanta are lost in obscurity, but in all probability they date to the 6th century AD and represent the period of Brahmanical revival after Buddhism began to decline. From the pier, where visitors disembark from the boats, a long flight of 125 steps leads to the temple's main **Northern Entrance**. This is a huge square hall with sides measuring 40 m (141 ft), supported by two dozen massive pillars. Here, in a deep recess against the rear (south) wall, is the huge triple-headed Shiva statue, the **Mahesamurti**. This is the glory of Elephanta, and few visitors can fail to be moved by this powerful, compelling image, hailed by art historian Percy Brown as "the creation of a genius". The three faces represent Shiva in his different manifestations. The central

face with its towering, elaborate crown depicts Shiva the Preserver, supremely serene and introspective. The one facing west represents Shiva the Creator, gentle, solicitous and graceful. The head facing east, with its cruel, mouth fiercely hooked nose and serpents adorning the hair, shows Shiva as the Destroyer. On either side of the statue are other superb sculptures.



The 5.5-m (18-ft) high Mahesamurti, dominating the cave temple

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

9 km (6 miles) NE of Mumbai. from Gateway of India at 9am for ferries, (022) 2202 6364 Wed-Mon. Elephanta Music & Dance Festival (Feb).



The Elephanta caves, cut into the cliff high above the water

The one on the east shows Shiva as **Ardhanarishvara** – the Lord who is Both Male and Female, and thus symbolizes the Divine Unity in which all opposites are resolved. The image on the west is of Shiva as **Gangadhara**, helping the river goddess Ganga descend to earth (see p163), while his consort Parvati and other deities look on.

Contrasting images of peace and violence, joy and fury, can be seen in exquisite sculptures throughout the temple. Thus, one sculpture near the **Western Entrance** lyrically depicts the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, while opposite it is a powerful panel showing Shiva brutally impaling the demon Andhaka. The **Eastern Entrance** has Shiva and Parvati contentedly playing dice in their mountain abode, as the demon-king Ravana tries to destroy their home by shaking the mountain.

Shopping & Entertainment in Mumbai

Mumbai is one of India's best shopping destinations. Large malls, department stores and exclusive boutiques stocking international brand names, coexist with traditional bazaars and pavement stalls selling everything from diamonds to dentures. Mumbai also has a vibrant nightlife, with more discotheques and pubs than any other Indian city. As the home of the Hindi film industry, Bollywood, Mumbai often holds gala premiere nights at its many cinema halls. The city's crowded cultural calendar also includes several concerts, exhibitions, theatre shows and festivals. But perhaps the best entertainment the city offers is the non-stop circus on its bustling streets and sidewalks.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

South Mumbai's main shopping areas include Colaba Causeway, Kemp's Corner and the shopping arcade in the Oberoi Hotel at Nariman Point. The traditional market for fresh produce is Crawford Market (see p453), while Bhuleshwar and Kalbadevi, north of the Fort area, are popular haunts for textiles and jewellery. Crossroads, a large new shopping mall, has come up in central Mumbai, close to the Haji Ali Mosque.

ANTIQUES AND JEWELLRY

A fascinating place for antiques is Chor Bazaar or "Thieves Market" near Crawford Market. This warren of shops is crammed with colonial furniture, Victorian bric-a-brac and Chinese porcelain, along with a lot of junk and fakes. Very good bargains can still be found here. **Phillips Antiques**, on Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk, stocks a fine collection of old postcards, prints and Ravi-era lithographs. There are strict rules, however, regarding the export of antiques (see p758).

Central Mumbai's Zaveri Bazaar is lined with jewellers' shops, **Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri** being the most famous. **Palazzo** at the Crossroads Mall has dozens of jewellery stores under one roof, offering elegant, exclusive designs. The shopping arcades at the **Oberoi** and **Taj Hotels** (see p707 & p708) are also good places to shop for jewellery

TEXTILES AND FASHION

Mumbai is a highly fashion-conscious city and most Indian designers have outlets here. Exclusive boutiques include **Ensemble**, **Melange** and **Abraham & Thakore** while casual ready-made garments are available at **Cotton World**, **Fantasia** and **Indian Textiles** specialize in a wide range of traditional Indian textiles and weaves, including silk saris, home furnishings and accessories. For good quality handwoven home furnishings and floor-coverings, the best shop is **Shyam Ahuja**.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Handicrafts from all over India are available in Mumbai. The widest range and best quality can be found at the **Cottage Industries Emporium**, **Contemporary Arts and Crafts** and **Bombay Store** in the Fort area. **Chimanlal's** has a good selection of handmade paper while **Inshallah Maashallah** stocks pure perfume essence (*attar*) in tiny glass bottles capturing the fragrances of rose, vetiver and jasmine.

Mumbai is renowned for its high quality leather goods at reasonable prices. **Rasulbhai Adamji** at Colaba, and many shops in the Oberoi Shopping Centre have a good range of jackets, handbags, wallets and luggage, some of it "inspired by Gucci, Prada and Louis Vuitton". **Joy Shoes** at the Taj Hotel has high quality shoes

and leather accessories. Books, CDs and audio cassettes of both Indian and Western music are available at various outlets throughout the city, including hotel bookshops. However one of the best shops for music is **Rhythm House**.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDES, TICKETS AND VENUES

Daily newspapers list the day's entertainment and events on their engagements page. Another good source of information is the magazine *Discover Mumbai*. A useful website which offers online information on cultural events and entertainment is www.explocity.com. Tickets for most concerts and plays can be bought at **Rhythm House** or at the venue itself. The major venues for Mumbai's cultural events are the **NCPA** or the National Centre for the Performing Arts (see p458), the **Nehru Centre** auditorium and **Shanmukhananda Hall**, **Prithvi Theatre** in Juhu (see p460), is a lively centre for stage productions. Other active exhibition venues include the **Jehangir Art Gallery**, the **NGMA** (National Gallery of Modern Art) and the **Artists' Centre** located at Kala Ghoda (see pp448-9).

PERFORMING ARTS

Mumbai is a great centre of classical Indian music, and many well-known performers can be heard here. This cosmopolitan city also has many enthusiasts of jazz and Western classical music (conductor Zubin Mehta received his early training in Mumbai) and frequent concerts are held by both local and visiting international groups. Classical and folk dance performances from different parts of the country also feature regularly on the cultural calendar. Mumbai has a vibrant theatre tradition, with productions in English as well as Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi. These are often staged in the open at **Horniman Circle Gardens** (see

p452) The cultural high season is from November to April. Though performances take place through the year

CINEMA

As the capital of the Hindi film industry, Mumbai hosts a number of film-related events. Most of the film studios are located in the suburbs as are the private residences of most screen celebrities. Great fanfare precedes the release of big-budget blockbusters, and glittering premieres are held at popular cinema halls such as **Sterling Regal** and **Metro**. These draw star-struck fans who spend hours standing outside, waiting for a

glimpse of their favourite stars. Film festivals, documentary film screenings, lectures, talks and exhibitions are also held throughout the year at various venues, such as the **British Council**.

HERITAGE TOURS

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) offers guided tours of Mumbai on double-decker buses. **Bombay Heritage Walks**, organized by a group of young architects, take visitors through historical districts such as Banganga, Khotachiwadi and the Fort area, on weekends except during the monsoon (June to September). Prior booking is necessary.

NIGHTCLUBS AND BARS

Mumbai's nightlife is more active than that of any other Indian city. While nightclubs and bars open and close at regular intervals, some have remained consistently popular. One of the newest is **Fire & Ice**, ingeniously housed in a mill compound in Parel. In south Mumbai, **Not Just Jazz by the Bay** has live music Wednesday through Saturday. Most hotels have their own bars and nightclubs such as **Insomnia** at the Taj and **Opium Den** at the Oberoi, both of which attract Bollywood's A-list stars. Another favourite haunt of Mumbai's jetset is **Athena**, one of the city's trendiest new nightspots.

DIRECTORY

ANTIQUES AND JEWELLERY

Palazzo

Crossroads Mall

Tel (022) 2351 5890

Phillips Antiques

SP Mukherjee Chowk

Tel (022) 2202 0564

Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri

Zaveri Bazaar

Tel (022) 2342 5001

TEXTILES AND FASHION

Abraham & Thakore

The Courtyard, Colaba

Tel (022) 5638 5486

Cotton World

Mandlik Rd, Colaba

Tel (022) 2283 3294

Ensemble

Great Western Bldg, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg

Tel (022) 2287 2883

Fantasia

Oberoi Shopping Centre

Tel (022) 2284 6369

Indian Textiles

Taj Hotel, Apollo Bunder

Tel (022) 2202 8783

Melange

Allamunt Rd

Tel (022) 2385 4492

Shyam Ahuja

Crossroads Mall

Tel (022) 2351 5890

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Bombay Store

Western India House, PM Rd, Fort Area

Tel (022) 2288 5048

Chimanlal's

Fort Area

Tel (022) 2207 7717

Cottage Industries Emporium

Chhatrapati Shivaji M Rd

Tel (022) 2202 6564

Contemporary Arts and Crafts

Napean Sea Rd

Tel (022) 2363 1979

Inshallah Maashallah

Colaba

Tel (022) 2204 9495

Joy Shoes

Taj Hotel, Apollo Bunder

Tel (022) 5665 3366

Rasulbhai Adamji

Colaba

Tel (022) 2202 1267

Rhythm House

Kala Ghoda

Tel (022) 2284 2835

ENTERTAINMENT INFORMATION

www.explocity.com

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

British Council

Nariman Point

Tel (022) 2282 3530

Jehangir Art Gallery

Fort Area

Tel (022) 2284 3989

NGMA

Kala Ghoda

Tel (022) 2285 2457

NCPA

Nariman Point

Tel (022) 2283 4500

Nehru Centre

Worli

Tel (022) 2496 4676

Prithvi Theatre

Janaki Kuttir,

Juhu

Tel (022) 2614 9546

Shanmukhananda Hall

King's Circle

Tel (022) 2401 5164

CINEMA

Metro

MG Rd

Dhobi Talao

Tel (022) 2203 0303

Regal

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk

Tel (022) 2202 1017

Sterling

Hazarnai Soman Marg

Tel (022) 2207 5187

HERITAGE TOURS

Bombay Heritage Walks

Tel (022) 2834 4622

NIGHTCLUBS AND BARS

Athena

Minoo Desai Marg, Colaba

Tel (022) 2280 5155

Fire & Ice

Parel

Tel (022) 2498 0555

Insomnia

Taj Hotel, Apollo Bunder

Tel (022) 5665 3366

Not Just Jazz by The Bay

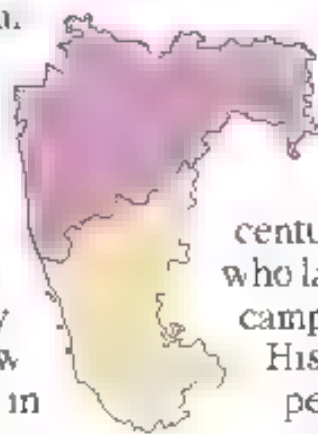
Manne Drive

Tel (022) 2285 1876



MAHARASHTRA

Lush green hills, scenic coastal plains and busy industrial centres make up the varied landscape of Maharashtra, which covers an area of 300,000 sq km (115,831 sq miles). The hills of the Western Ghats, source of many rivers, run parallel to the narrow Konkan Coast, while cradled in the centre is the Deccan Plateau, formed from black volcanic lava 70 million years ago. This area saw a great flowering of art and architecture from the 2nd century BC onwards, and two famous UNESCO World Heritage sites are located here – the Buddhist caves



at Ajanta and the rock cut temples at Ellora. The rocky terrain around Pune is dotted with the massive forts built by the 17th century Maratha leader, Shivaji, who launched successful guerrilla campaigns against the Mughals. His cult like status is today perpetuated by the Shiv Sena, a nationalist political party. Modern Maharashtra is a prosperous, highly industrialized region, with a strong agrarian base. Cotton and tobacco are widely cultivated, as are a variety of fruits including oranges, *chikoo*s (sapodilla) and mangoes.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

Ahmednagar ①
Aurangabad ②
Kolhapur ③
Nagpur ④
Pune ⑤
Wardha ⑥

Temple Towns & Holy Places

Nasik ⑦
Pandharpur ⑧

Historic Sites

Ajanta ⑨
Daulatabad ⑩
Ellora ⑪
Marud-Janjira ⑫

National Parks & Geographical Sites

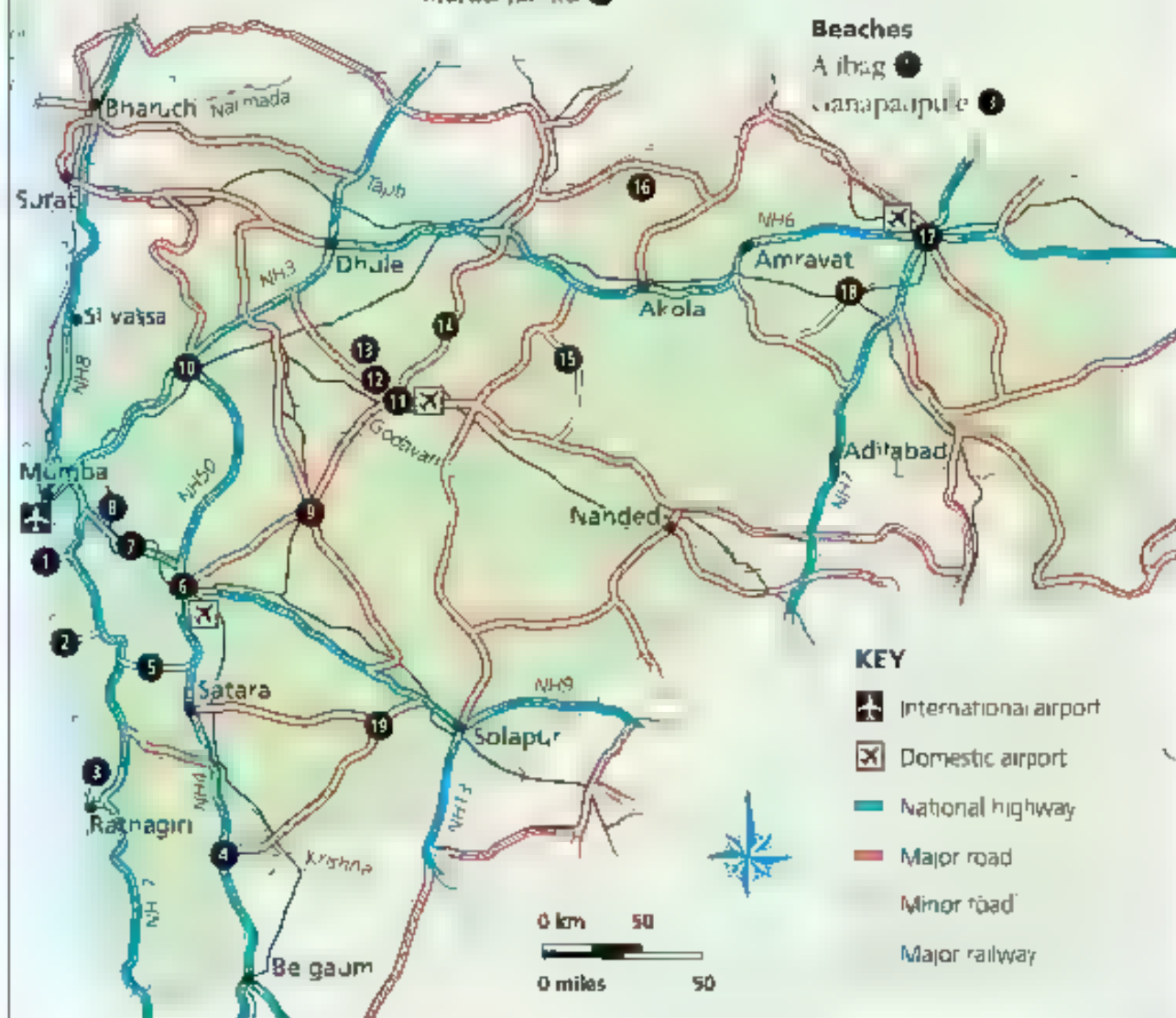
Lonar ⑬
Melghat Tiger Reserve ⑭

Hill Stations

Lonavla ⑮
Mahabaleshwar ⑯
Matheran ⑰

Beaches

Airbag ⑱
Sanpadaipule ⑲





View of the imposing Janjira Fort, built on an island

Alibag ❶

Raigarh district 108 km (67 miles) S of Mumbai from Gateway of India, Mumbai, to Mandve, 18 km (11 miles); at Alibag, then bus.

The port of Alibag was developed by the Marathas in the 17th century to protect their kingdom from the Dutch, Portuguese and the increasingly powerful British. Alibag is today a quiet town, just across the bay from Mumbai. Its most impressive sight is its beach – a 5-km (3-mile) stretch of soft silver sand, lined by a stand of coconut and casuarina trees.

Kolaba Fort, constructed on an island in 1680 by the Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji (see p471), looms over the skyline. It is a forbidding grey mass of lead, steel and stone, built on a rock jutting from the sea, and can be reached on foot during low tide. Within its high ramparts are enclosed a temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha – and next to it a sweet-water well that must have been useful during sieges. There are two main entrances to the fort, one from the shore and another from the sea. The enormous shore-side doorway is decorated with sculptures of tigers, elephants and peacocks.

Environs

Kihim Beach, 9 km (6 miles) north of Alibag, is a tranquil getaway with woods brimming with birds and wild flowers. It was the favourite haunt of the famous Indian ornithologist Salim Ali (1896–1987), author of the finest book on Indian birds.

Murud-Janjira ❷

Raigarh district 185 km (115 miles) S of Mumbai from Gateway of India, Mumbai, to Mandve, 120 km (74 miles); N of Murud, then bus from Rajapur to Janjira Fort.

A sleepy coastal town with Indo-Gothic houses and meandering pathways, Murud has a picture-perfect beach that promises lazy, sunny afternoons and cool dips in the clean sea. The little village of Rajpur, 4 km (2.5 miles) south of the main Murud town, is the gateway to the Janjira Fort, the strongest island-fort in the Konkan, still enduring the surge and retreat of the Arabian Sea. Boats are available at Rajpur to take visitors to the fort.

Also evocatively known as the Jazira-Mehruba or “Moon Fort”, it was built in 1511 by the Siddis, who originally arrived in the Deccan from Abyssinia as slave-traders. The fortress, with its high ramparts, 22 bastions and granite walls joined with lead to withstand the onslaught of the sea, proved invincible against attacks by the Portuguese and British and even against the great



Alphonso mango

Maratha leader, Shivaji. Steps lead to a sturdy stone gate, where a stone engraving of a lion holding six diminutive elephants in captivity represents six successive Siddi victories. Rusty cannons point outwards through niches in the ramparts. The palaces, gardens and mosques lie in silent ruin, and luxurious vegetation grows around the palace of the Siddi ruler, Sirul Khan.

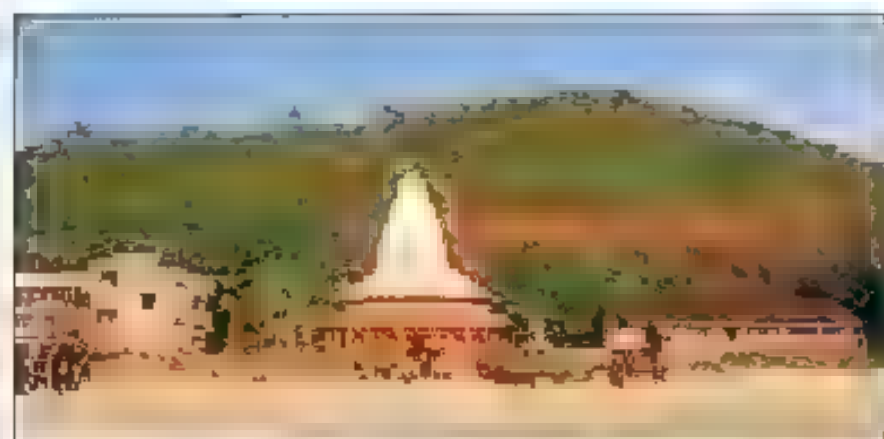
Ganapatipule ❸

Ratnagiri district 365 km (227 miles) S of Mumbai Ratnagiri, 22 km (14 miles) S of Ganapatipule, then bus Gaun Ganapati (Sep/Oct).

The small coastal village of Ganapatipule derives its name from the 400-year-old temple of Swayambhu Ganapati, where the naturally occurring *Idol* of Ganapati (the local name of Lord Ganesha) is revered by Hindus as one of the eight sacred sites, or “Ashta Ganapatis”, in India. Despite attracting the usual smattering of holy men and mendicants, its beach has long stretches of pristine white sands and clear waters. Beyond the coast lie groves of fruit trees, including mango, banana, jackfruit, coconut and betel nut.

Environs

Ratnagiri, 19 km (12 miles) south of Ganapatipule, is famous for its groves of delicious Alphonso mangoes, locally known as *bapis*. Ratnagiri's fortress, Bala Qila, is situated along the coast, and is intact, with a notable Bhagavati temple within its walls.



The Swayambhu Ganapati Temple, at the base of a hill in Ganapatipule

Ganesha, the Remover of Obstacles

Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati, is the most auspicious and popular deity in India, and especially beloved in Maharashtra. Images of the endearing, potbelied god are found in every household, on temple doorways and shop entrances, on letterheads and wedding invitations. No task or enterprise is ever begun



Lord Ganesha imitating the dance of Shiva

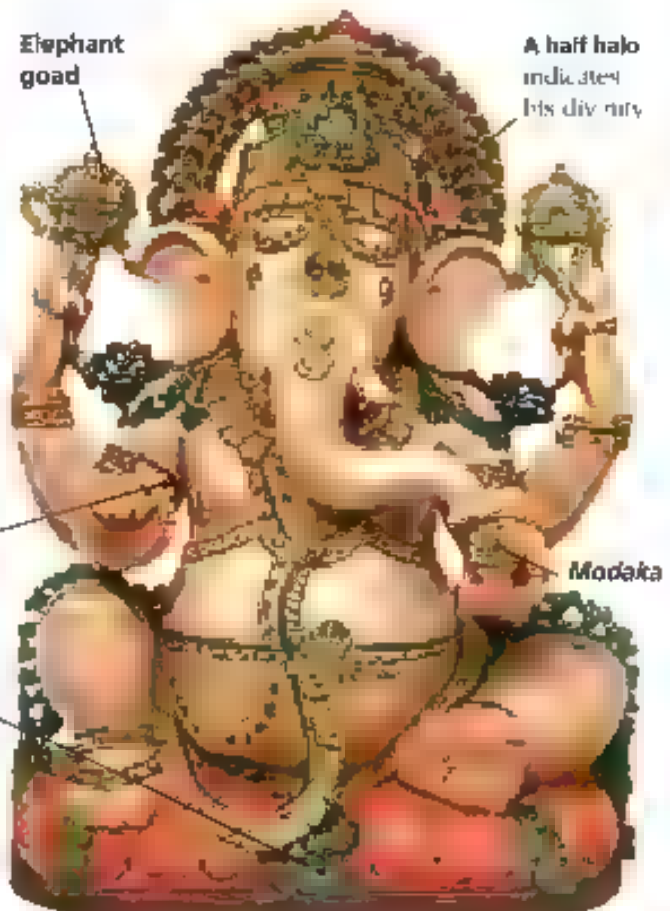
without invoking him, as he is the Lord of New Beginnings. Worshipped in many guises, he is Vighneswara, the Remover of Obstacles and Siddhagata, the God of Prosperity and Success. Ganesha is above all a friend, lovable and benign, and his festival, Ganesha Chaturthi, crosses all social boundaries uniting the people of Maharashtra in a frenzied ten-day celebration.

LORD GANESHA

Lord Ganesha's four arms hold his various attributes. Two of these, his broken tusk and a round sweetmeat called *modaka*, appear consistently. In the other two hands, he sometimes holds a lotus blossom, an elephant goad, an axe or prayer beads. According to legend, Ganesha gained his elephant head after Shiva, in a state of fury, cut his son's head off and then, in remorse, stuck on the head of a passing elephant.

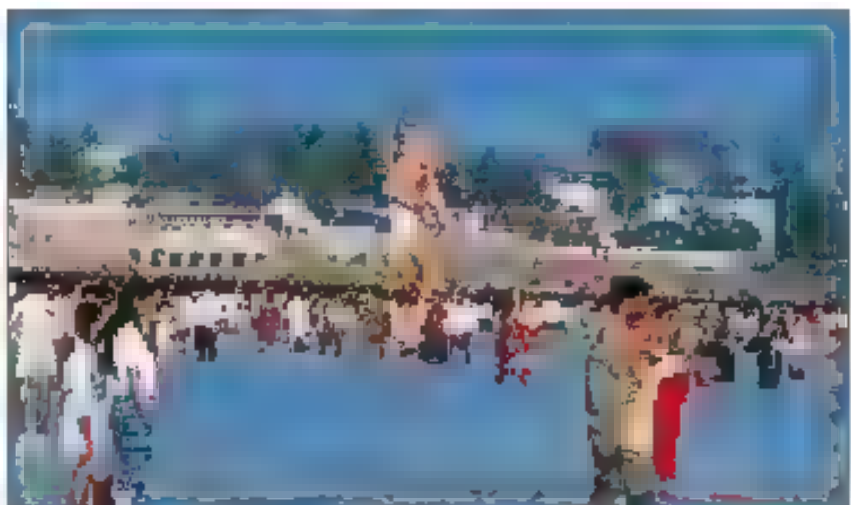
The broken tusk, used as a pen to write the *Mahabharata*, was the result of an encounter with Parasuram (see p679).

A rat is the vehicle of Ganesha.



Intricate clay images of Ganesha are made and consecrated on the first day of Ganesha Chaturthi (see p473). These are then enshrined in pandals or decorated stages, and worshipped continuously for ten days amidst Hindi and Marathi recitations and musical performances.

Colourful floats, accompanied by folk dancers, lead the serpentine processions that fill the streets amidst chants and drumbeats. The processions end at the water's edge where hundreds of idols are immersed in rivers, lakes or the sea. This final immersion on the tenth day marks the deity's return to his abode.





Colourful fishing boats docked off the Malvan coast

Kolhapur ④

Kolhapur district 225 km (140 miles)
S of Pune 𑀘 485,500 𑀙 𑀚 𑀛
Maharashtra Tourism, (0231) 265 2935.

Situated on the banks of the Panchganga river, the city of Kolhapur is a thriving commercial centre, noted today for its flourishing dairy industry. It is also one of Maharashtra's most important pilgrimage sites, associated from early times with the worship of Shakti (the Mother Goddess). Ruled by the Hindu Yadava dynasty between the 10th and 13th centuries, it was later occupied by the Muslims. In 1675, Kolhapur was finally seized by the Maratha chief Shivaji (see p471), and was later inherited

by his younger son. The state remained with the Bhonsles (one of the four Maratha princely families) until Independence.

Of the numerous temples in Kolhapur, the **Shri Mahalakshmi** or Amba Bai Temple, dedicated to the Mother Goddess, is the most venerated. Built in the 7th century by the Chalukya king Karnaadeva, the temple's idol, said to be a *suayambhu*, or naturally occurring monolith, is encrusted with diamonds and other precious stones. The *mandapa* has a finely carved ceiling. Behind the temple are the

remains of the **Old Palace** or Rajwada, where members of the former Maharaja's family still live.

Its huge entrance hall was once used for large public wedding ceremonies. Situated near the palace gates are the town's wrestling grounds, where young men practise traditional Indian wrestling, known as *kushti*.

The **New Palace**, 2 km (1.3 miles) north of the city centre, was completed in 1881 and designed by Major Charles Mant (see p118), who merged European, Jain, Hindu and Islamic elements to create a style which widely became



Kolhapuri chappals



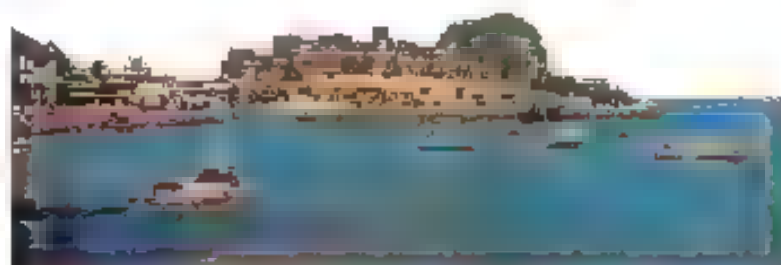
Fishing boat, Malvan coast

THE MALVAN COAST

The Southern Konkan coastline in the Sindhudurg district, known as the Malvan Coast, is dotted with marine forts and pretty fishing villages which, though off the beaten track, are worth visiting. **Vijaydurg Fort**, 505 km (314 miles) south of Mumbai, stands on the site of an 11th-century fort, rebuilt by the Bijapur sultans (see pp542-3) in the 16th century. In 1654, it was further renovated by Shivaji, who added three layers of fortifications, 27 bastions and 300 guns. It became the main naval base for the great Maratha admiral Kanhoji Angre, who used the fort to plunder European ships in

1698. It fell to the British in 1756; a platform stands within the grounds where British astronomers set up their telescopes to study a solar eclipse. About 74 km (46 miles) south of Vijaydurg, **Sindhudurg Fort**, built by Shivaji in 1664, lies deserted on an island known as Karte. With its 10-m (33-ft) high ramparts, it was a Maratha stronghold until power shifted to Vijaydurg. It is the only place in Maharashtra where a statue of Shivaji depicts him without a beard. His palm and feet impressions are preserved in mortar near the entrance. The small port of **Malvan**, 4 km (2.5 miles) north of Sindhudurg, lends its name to this stretch of coast. It is being developed into a beach resort, as is **Vengurla**, 52 km (32 miles) south of Malvan.

Savantwadi, 23 km (14 miles) east of Vengurla, was the capital of the Bhonsle kings. The art of making *ganyisa* cards (painted, circular playing cards) was developed here. The town is also known for its wooden toys and lacquer work. **Amboli**, 25 km (16 miles) northeast of Savantwadi, is a pretty hill station.



A view of Vijaydurg Fort, overlooking fishing boats in the bay

known as the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. The palace is today the **Shahy Chhatrapati Museum** and displays a collection of royal memorabilia, including garments, hunting photographs and one of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's swords.

The **Town Hall**, another structure designed by Mant, has a small museum with a number of artifacts from nearby excavation sites. Kolhapur is also famous for its hand-crafted leather slippers, known as Kolhapuri *chappals*.

Old Palace

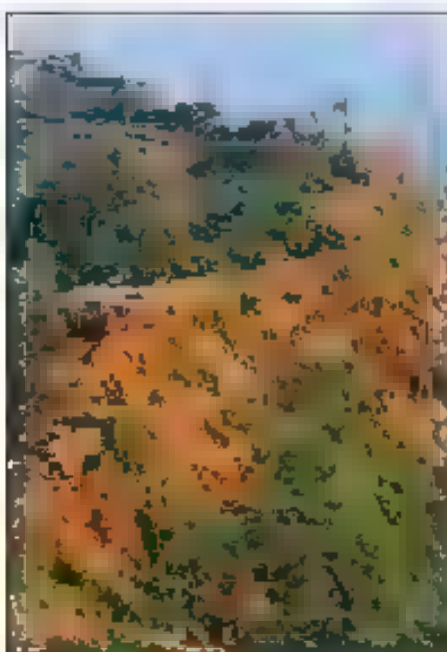
 daily

New Palace

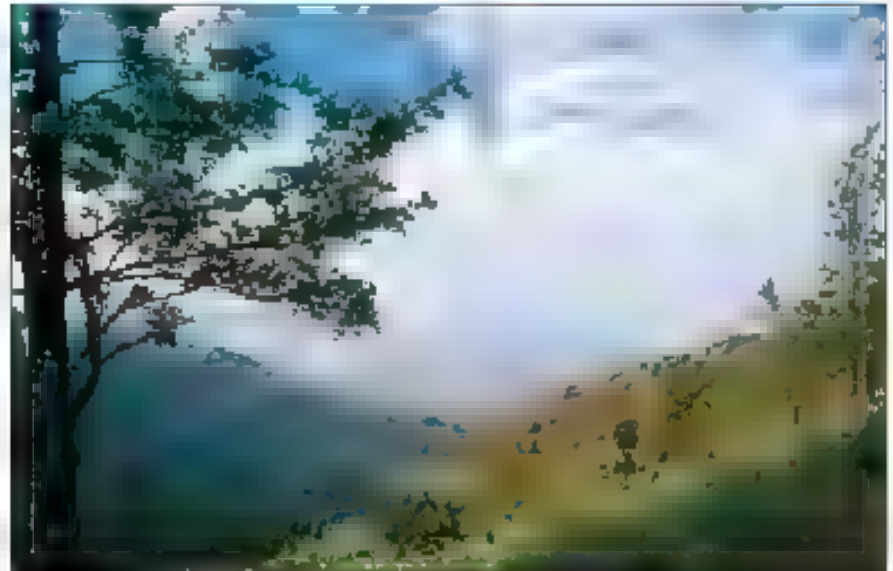
 daily 

Environs

One of the most important forts in the Deccan is at **Panhala**, a hill station 19 km (12 miles) northwest of Kolhapur. Situated on a steep hillside, the fortress is well protected by three impressive double-walled gates, and 7-km (4-mile) long ramparts. Within its walls stand two temples, one dedicated to Amba Bai and the other to Maruti, the Wind God. The most interesting monuments are the huge stone granaries, the largest of which, **Ganga Kothi**, covers 948 sq m (10,204 sq ft). Established in the 12th century by Raja Bhoja II, the fortress fell successively to the Yadavas, the Adil Shahis of Bijapur, Shivaji, Emperor Aurangzeb and the British. There are



Panhala Fort in the picturesque Sahyadri Hills, after the monsoon



Panchgani, with spectacular views of the Krishna river

many private homes in Pannala as well, including that of the famous Indian singer Lata Mangeshkar (see p563).

Mahabaleshwar ●

Satara district, 115 km (72 miles) SW of Pune  12,800  Cycles available

The largest hill station in Maharashtra, Mahabaleshwar is situated 1,372 m (4,501 ft) above sea level. In 1828, Sir John Malcolm, Governor of Bombay, chose this beautiful spot as the site for the official sanatorium. Soon after, the wooded slopes were covered with typical colonial structures among them **Christ Church**, **Frere Hall**, **Government House** (which was the grand residence of the governor), the **Mahabaleshwar Club**, and the ever-popular polo grounds and race course.

Due to its high altitude, the town has a cool climate and offers many pleasant walks. There are also several lookout points such as **Bombay Point**, from where the sea can be seen on a clear day, and **Arthur's Seat**, which affords panoramic views of the Konkan Coast. **Venna Lake** has facilities for boating.

In the old town is the sacred **Krishna Temple**, supposedly built on the legendary site of the Panchganga, or source of five rivers – the Koyna, Savitri, Venna, Gayatri and the mighty Krishna. The latter covers

1,400 km (870 miles), stretching from this spot to the Bay of Bengal on the east coast. The temple has a much venerated, naturally occurring Shivalinga, and a small tank. There are two other temples here dedicated to Hanuman and Rama. There are also several berry farms close by, where visitors can help to pick strawberries, raspberries and mulberries.

Environs

The hill station of **Panchgani**, 18 km (11 miles) east of Mahabaleshwar, is surrounded by five hills. The town is the starting point for many scenic trekking trails (see p473). It is also dotted with some charming old British and Parsi bungalows, some of which can be visited. The majestic hill-top forts of **Pratapgarh** and **Raigad**, 18 km (11 miles) west and 70 km (44 miles) northwest of Mahabaleshwar, respectively, were both

Maratha strongholds. They offer commanding views of the surrounding countryside.

About 111 km (69 miles) south of Mahabaleshwar is **Chiplun**, lying on the banks of the Vashishti river, whose waters supply Koyna Lake, a large man-made reservoir. The town is well-known for its irrigation scheme, developed in the 1960s, that provides water to the coastal fringe between the Sahyadri Hills and the sea. This quiet place offers splendid views of the Vashishti river as it winds through the hills.



Water spout, Krishna Temple



The sprawling campus of Pune University

Pune ⑥

Pune district 170 km (106 miles) SE of Mumbai 2,540,500 12 km (7 miles) NE of city centre, then taxi or auto. Maharashtra Tourism, 1 Block, Central Bldg, (020) 2612 6867 Ganesha Chaturthi (Aug/Sep)

The fast-growing industrial city of Pune is situated on the Deccan Plateau, at the confluence of the Mutha and Mula rivers, and is bounded by the Sahyadris in the west. Its pleasant climate and proximity to Mumbai made it the perfect monsoon capital for the British in the 19th century. Then called Poona, it became an important administrative centre and military cantonment. Even today, the Indian army's Southern Command is based here.

Pune was also the childhood home of the Maratha leader, Shivaji. From 1750 until 1817, it was the capital of the Maratha Confederacy and was ruled by the Peshwas. The remains of the **Shaniwar Wada Palace** is in the old city. Built in 1736, the palace was razed in a fire in 1828. Only its outer walls and the main entrance with large spikes, designed to deter the enemy's elephants, survive. Further south is **Vishram Bagh Wada**, a beautiful Peshwa palace with an elaborate wooden façade.

For many visitors, Pune is synonymous with the famous **Osho International Commune** founded by Bhagwan

Rajneesh or Osho, and situated at Koregaon Park in the north of the city. The flamboyant pop mystic, or "sex guru" as he was called, had a meteoric rise in the West. Even after his demise in 1990, his well-appointed ashram continues to attract devotees from Europe and America. Housed in a traditional Marathi house or *wada*, is the charming privately owned **Raja Kelkar Museum**.

On display are a collection of beautiful everyday objects such as pots, lamps, pens, ink stands, collection of nutcrackers, and other utilitarian items. An interesting piece is a Maharashtrian Chitrakathi scroll painting, used in folk theatre performances.

The **Tribal Museum**, east of the railway station, showcases the state's tribal cultures especially from the Sahyadri and Gondwana regions.

The **Aga Khan Palace**, across the Mula river to the north of the city, was where Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned by the British for two years; today, it is the Gandhi National Memorial. Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, died here and her ashes have been interred in a memorial in the gardens.

Other places of interest in the city include St Mary's Church, a fine garrison structure consecrated in 1825, the

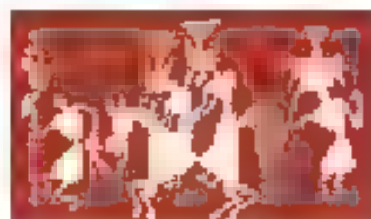
rock-cut Pataleshwar Temple, dating from the 8th century, the Parvati Temple perched on a hilltop, and fine gardens, such as Empress Botanical Gardens and Bund Gardens.

Pune is the centre of Marathi culture, with a lively tradition of theatre, classical music and dance. It is also an important university town and is home to the prestigious government-run Film and Television Institute and the National Film Archives.

Environs

About 6 km (4 miles) southwest is the **National Defence Academy**, the training school for army, navy and air force cadets, at Khadakvasla. Further southwest are the forts of **Rajgad** and **Sinhgad** (the "Lion Fort"). The latter is associated with Shivaji's general, Tanaji Malasare.

According to legend, he tied strong ropes to monitor lizards made the creatures stick to the fort walls with their adhesive foot pads, and thus scaled the walls and captured the fort.



A Wari painting from Raja Kelkar Museum

Osho International Commune

Tel (020) 401 9999 daily

Raja Kelkar Museum

1378, Shukrawar Peth. daily public hols.

Tribal Museum

Off Koregaon Rd. daily

Aga Khan Palace

Ahmadnagar Rd. Mon-Sat 2nd & 4th Sat, public hols.



Vishram Bagh Wada, a Peshwa palace in the heart of the old city

Shivaji and the Marathas

Maharashtra's greatest hero, Shivaji, was born in 1627 to Shahji Bhonsle, a chieftain from Pune who served the sultans of Bijapur (see pp542-5). Daring, ambitious and restless since his boyhood, by the age of 19 he had become the head of a band of intrepid fighters. Soon, Shivaji's brilliant guerrilla tactics against Emperor Aurangzeb and the powerful Mughal



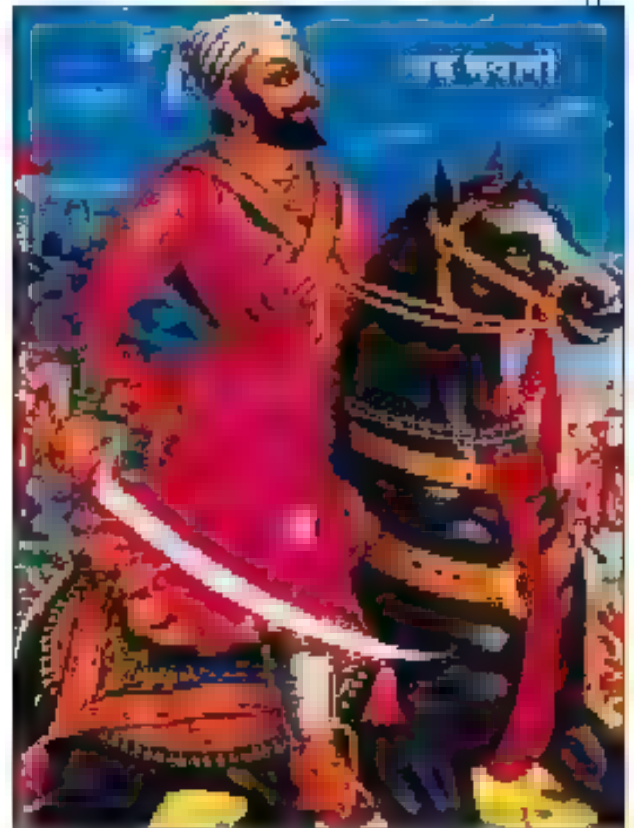
Coronation Canopy at Raigad

army, and his swift conquests of mountain and sea forts, enabled him to establish a separate Maratha kingdom. In 1674, he was crowned Chhatrapati, the traditional title of a Hindu monarch, at his capital, Raigad. When he died in 1680, at the age of 53, he left behind a powerful Maratha state, which continued to play an important role in Indian history for the next 100 years.



Waghnaikh ("tiger's claw") a deadly hand weapon, was used by Shivaji to overcome and kill Afzal Khan, the Bijapur general, in a "friendly" meeting at Pratapgad.

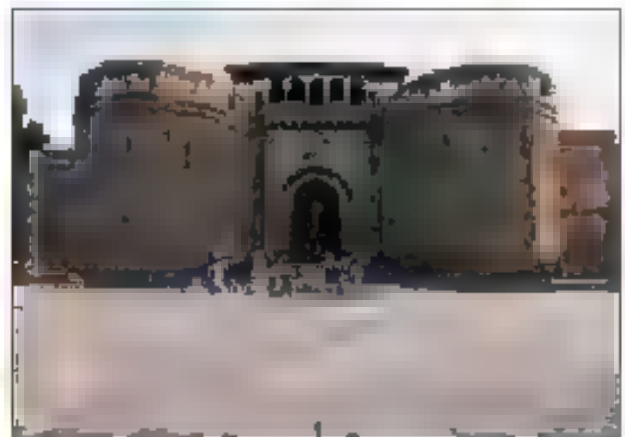
Maratha horsemen were feared for their lightning raids which wrought havoc on enemy territory. The Deccan Plateau's hilly terrain aided their guerrilla tactics against the Mughals.



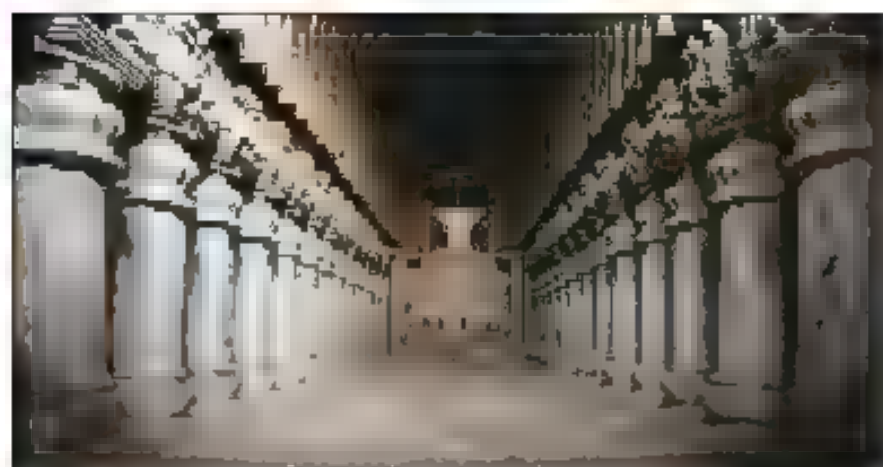
Shivaji is revered all over Maharashtra as a god-like hero. A fearless soldier and charismatic leader, he united the Marathas into a formidable force that defied the mighty Mughals. Today, he has become a symbol for the Hindu revivalist movement.



Fortresses, such as Raigad and Rajgad (see p469) and the sea forts (see p468) along the west coast, were the key to Maratha strategy and success. Shivaji's conquest of the crucial Purandhar Fort in 1649 compelled the sultan of Bijapur to condemn him as a rebel.



Shanwar Wada was the former residence of the Peshwas, who came to power after Shivaji's grandson's death. The other main clans of the Maratha Confederacy - which was a significant power in the 18th century - were the Holkars (see p246), Scindias (see pp228-9), Gaekwads (see p419) and Bhonsles (see p468).



The Buddhist *chaitya griha* at Karla Cave, near Lonavla

Lonavla 7

Pune district 62 km (39 miles) NW of Pune 55,700 **Karla Cave** Maharashtra Tourism, Karla, (02114) 282 230. daily **Bhaja Caves**

Situated on the main train line from Mumbai to Pune, Lonavla was once a sleepy hill station famous for its *chikki*—a type of caramelized sweet. It has now become an extremely popular weekend getaway for city-dwellers from nearby Mumbai. Spread around the bustling main street, lined with souvenir shops, the town offers pleasant walks and is a convenient base for exploring the surrounding hills.

Environs

About 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Lonavla is **Khandala**, another pretty town with panoramic views of the scenic Western Ghats. The famous Buddhist rock-cut

Karla Cave 11 km (7 miles) east of Lonavla, dates from the 2nd to 1st centuries BC. The splendid *chaitya griha* (see p20), the largest and best preserved of the early Buddhist caves in the Deccan—is the most significant sight here. It has a magnificently sculpted courtyard, a towering 14-m (46-ft) high façade with a horseshoe shaped window and a large pilared hall with a monolithic stupa.



Statue of a divine couple, Karla Cave

The 20-odd **Bhaja Caves**, located 3 km (2 miles) off the Karla road, are the oldest in the region, dating from the 2nd century BC. Cave 12, a *chaitya griha*, still contains the remains of wooden beams on its ceiling. On either side of the façade are carvings of multistoreyed structures with windows and balconies. The **Bedsa Caves**, situated 9 km (6 miles) southeast of Bhaja, date to the 1st century AD. The roof of the main cave bears faint traces of paintings

Matheran 8

Raigarh district 118 km (73 miles) NW of Pune 5,200 From Neral Junction, take the toy train to Matheran (2 hrs) Opp railway station

The closest hill station to Mumbai, Matheran (which means “Mother Forest”) lies at a height of 803 m (2,635 ft) above sea level. This picturesque town is situated in the forested Sahyadri Hills. In 1855, Lord Elphinstone, the governor of Bombay, visited Matheran and the town soon became fashionable. The stately **Elphinstone Lodge** that he built became his weekend retreat. A railway line was laid in 1907, and a quaint toy train (see p777) still winds its way slowly through hills and forests from the junction at Neral. All motor vehicles are completely banned within the limits of the town, making it uniquely peaceful despite the burgeoning crowds of visitors, particularly on weekends.

Matheran has as many as 33 lookout points. **Porcupine Point** or Sunset Point, a favourite with sightseers, is known for its spectacular sunsets. **Louisa Point** has views of the ruined Prabal Fort and a mountain trail called Shivaji's Ladder. By far the most impressive viewpoint is **Hart Point**, from where it is possible, on a clear day, to see Mumbai in the distance. St Paul's Anglican Church, the pretty Lord's Hotel and the Roman Catholic Church are among the many Raj-era buildings in Matheran.



Splendid views at Portcupine Point, also known as Sunset Point, Matheran

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp708–9 and pp736–7



Carved stonework, Damri Mosque

Ahmadnagar ⑨

Ahmadnagar district 140 km (87 miles)
NE of Pune 🚗 307,500 🏠 🚆

The seat of a powerful Muslim kingdom in the 16th century, Ahmadnagar was founded in 1490 by Ahmad Nizam Shah Bahri, the son of a Hindu convert. In 1599, the Mughals, led by Akbar, invaded the city after his favourite commander Abu Fazl murdered the ruling sultan. However the sultan's sister, Chand Bibi, ably defended the kingdom. The succeeding years saw the rise of Malik Ambar, a former African slave who fought

successful battles against neighbouring Bidar (see pp451) and Golconda (see pp666-7). In 1636, the kingdom finally submitted to Mughal rule.

The rulers of the Nizam Shahi dynasty were great builders, and their style of architecture shows an unmistakable Persian influence. The **Ahmadnagar Fort**, 4 km (2.5 miles) northeast of the station, was built in 1490, though the impressive stone walls were added in 1563. Its palace, the only surviving structure, consists of a large hall with a series of domes. In 1912 it housed an important political prisoner, Jawahar Nehru, who wrote his famous book, *The Discovery of India*, here. The **Jami Masjid** dates to the same period. Nearby is the ornate **Damri Mosque**. Built in 1568, it has a cut-out trefoil parapet and finials topped by miniature pavilions.

Emperor Aurangzeb died in Ahmadnagar in 1707, and his body rested briefly at the small **Alamgir Dargah**, near the cantonment, before being interred at Khuldabad (see 475).

To the west of the town lies **Bagh Rauza**, a walled garden complex. It contains the mausoleum of Ahmad Nizam Shah Bahri, which has a lavishly decorated interior

HIKING IN THE SAHYADRI

The Western Ghats, also known in Maharashtra as the Sahyadris, run parallel to India's west coast and stretch across the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. Formed from volcanic rock, the hills are a maze of ridges and valleys. In Maharashtra, the many popular hill stations serve as excellent starting points for a number of scenic walking trails. **Mahabaleshwar** and **Panchgani** are particularly well marked with hiking routes that lead through lush forests and valleys. These hills also have a wealth of craggy rock faces perfect for climbing and **Lonavla** is a favourite base for rock climbing enthusiasts. **Matheran** has a much-trodden path known as Shivaji's Ladder, which

leads from One Tree Hill down to the valley below. The Sahyadri Hills are particularly beautiful in September after the rains, when the hills are carpeted with wild flowers and cascading waterfalls seem to appear at every turn.

FESTIVALS OF MAHARASHTRA

Janmashtami (1st Aug)

The birth of Lord Krishna is celebrated enthusiastically all over the state. Pots of butter are strung high in the streets and human pyramids attempt to reach them, imitating the god's childhood pranks.



Janmashtami in Mumbai

Naga Panchami (Aug/Sep)

Snakes, considered powerful creatures and revered across India, are worshipped during this festival. After being fed cupfuls of milk, they are taken out in colourful processions and later released into the fields.

Ganesha Chaturthi

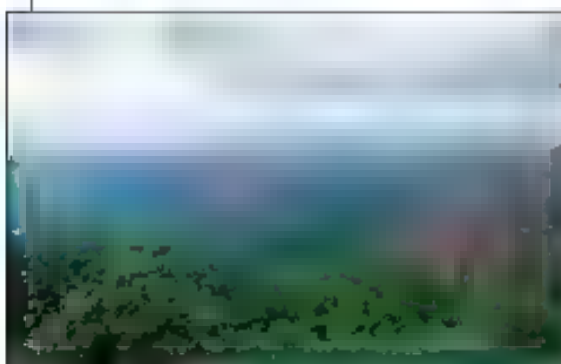
(Aug/Sep) This is the most significant festival in Maharashtra, celebrated with particular fervour in Pune and Mumbai. Clay idols of Lord Ganesha (see p467) are made and then worshipped over 10 days, amidst lively festivities. After this they are led in colourful processions to the closest water body and immersed.

Kalidasa Festival (Nov)

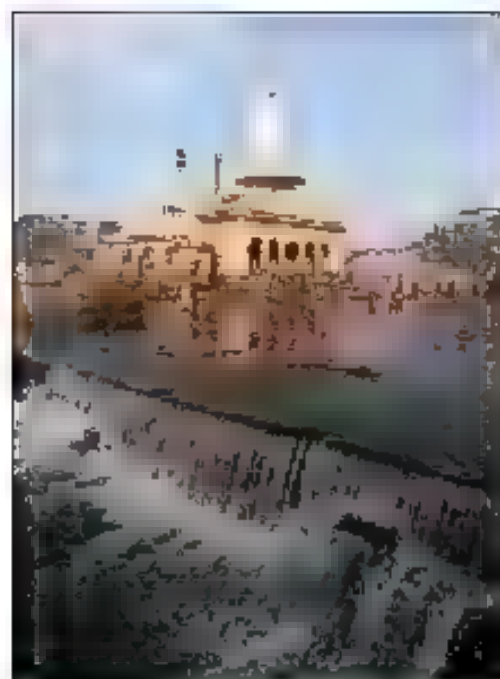
Nagpur. Some of the most renowned exponents of classical music and dance gather at this festival, organized to honour the 4th-century Sanskrit dramatist and poet, Kalidasa.

Ellora Festival (Dec)

Ellora. This festival presents a variety of classical performing arts against the evocative setting of the Kailasanatha Temple.



The rugged ranges of the Sahyadri Hills



The holy tank of Ramkund, Nasik

Nasik 10

Nasik district 187 km (116 miles) NE of Mumbai 𑌐 077,000 𑌐 𑌐 Maharashtra Tourism, (0253) 257 0059 𑌐 Kumbh Mela (every 12 years).

The town of Nasik is one of India's most holy sites. A bustling temple town, built on both banks of the Godavan river, it has almost 200 shrines. The ghats that line the river front are the venue for the spectacular Kumbh Mela (see p211). Legend says that Rama, hero of the *Ramayana* (see p27), lived here during his 14-year exile. **Ramkund**, the centrally located tank and the town's focal point, is believed to mark the spot where Rama and his wife Sita bathed. The ashes of the dead are also immersed here.

Most of Nasik's temples date to the 18th century. The **Kala Rama Temple**, east of Ramkund, is built in black stone with a 25-m (82-ft) high *shikhara*. It supposedly marks the spot where Sita was abducted by Ravana. The **Rameshwar Temple** has carvings on the roof of its wall, while the **Muktidham Temple**, close to the station, carries inscriptions from the *Bhagavad Gita* on its walls.

Environs

Pandu Lena 8 km (5 miles) south of Nasik, has 24 Buddhist caves dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries BC. The oldest is Cave 10, a *vihara* (monastery),

which has splendid sculptures and inscriptions above its entrance. Cave 18, an early *chattrya griba* has a beautifully carved exterior. Other fine caves include Caves 3 and 20. The sacred **Trimbakeshwar Temple**, 33 km (21 miles) west of Nasik, is built on the site of one of Shiva's 12 naturally-occurring *pyotirlingas* (lingas of light). It is surrounded by a large paved platform and has a carved *shikhara*. Though closed to non-Hindus, visitors can still get a good view of the courtyard and the shrine leading off it.

About 65 km (40 miles) south of Nasik is **Shirdi**, the temple complex of the first Sai Baba, Maharashtra's most popular saint, who died in 1988.

Aurangabad 11

Aurangabad district 404 km (251 miles) NE of Mumbai 𑌐 873,000. 𑌐 10 km (6 miles) E of town centre, then taxi 𑌐 𑌐 Maharashtra Tourism, Station Rd East, (0240) 233 1513.

The largest city in northern Maharashtra, Aurangabad is the nearest air-link to the splendid caves at Ellora and Ajanta (see pp476–81). It was founded in 1610 by Malik Ambar, prime minister of the Nizam Shahi rulers of Ahmadnagar (see p473). In 1653 it became the headquarters of Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal emperor. It was

from this city – which he renamed after himself – that he conquered the Deccan states.

The city's most famous monument is the **Bibi ka Maqbara**. Located outside the walled city, this imitation of the Taj was built in 1678 by Aurangzeb's son, Azam Shah, in memory of his mother Rabia Durrani. Standing in the middle of a large Mughal garden, it has four disproportionately large minarets at the ends of its raised platform. Like the Taj, it uses white marble and stucco, but there is none of the fine *pietra dura* work that distinguishes Shah Jahan's creation (see pp172–3).

Aurangzeb's walled city makes up the central part of the town, although a few structures from Malik Ambar's older city remain, including the **Naukonda Palace** (largely in ruins) and the **Jami Masjid**. On the left bank of the Khan river is the **Dargah of Baba Shah Musafir**, a Sufi saint who was Aurangzeb's spiritual guide. The complex contains a small mosque, a *madrasa* (theological college), a law court, the *zenana* (women's quarters) and a watermill.

(Panchakki) fed by a rectangular tank.

Also within the old city, close to Zafar Gate, is the **Himroo Factory**.

Aurangabad is famed for its ancient art of weaving

brocade, using silk and gold threads, known as *kamkhan*. When the city's prosperity declined, the weavers began



Detail of the entrance door Bibi ka Maqbara



Bibi ka Maqbara in Aurangabad, an imitation of Agra's Taj Mahal



An ornately carved pillared hall in Cave 3, Aurangabad Caves

using less expensive cotton and silver threads, producing *himroo*, which literally means similar. A variety of such shawls and saris are available in showrooms across town. The factory also produces rich Pathani saris, intricately woven with gold thread.

Environs

About 3 km (2 miles) north are the

Aurangabad Caves

Mainly excavated during the Vakatakas and Kalachuri periods (6th and 7th centuries), these caves can be divided into two groups. Of the five caves in the western group, the oldest is Cave 4, dating to the 1st century AD. It is a fine *chaitya griha* with a monolithic stupa. Carved on the rock face outside is a superb image of the Buddha seated on a lion throne. Cave 3 (5th century) has an ingeniously designed pillared hall that is acoustically sensitive and amplifies sound. Inside the inner sanctum, a Seated Buddha is flanked by devotees with floral offerings.

The eastern group, nearby, comprises four caves. Cave 6 has delicately sculpted Bodhisattvas, surrounded by flying figures. The most splendid of the caves is Cave 7, a sumptuous shrine with large sculptures of Tara and Avalokitesvara (see p141). Its inner sanctum has a superb frieze of a female dancer accompanied by seven musicians.



Himroo fabric, Aurangabad

Daulatabad ⑦

Aurangabad district 13 km (8 miles) E of Aurangabad Bus tours are offered by Maharashtra Tourism, Aurangabad, (0240) 233 1513. Taxis & jeeps also available from Aurangabad daily

Perched on a granite outcrop of the Deccan Plateau, this formidable fort has witnessed some of the greatest carnage in the region. Originally known as Deogiri, it was captured in 1296 by Alaaddin Khilji, the Deccan's first Muslim invader from Delhi. He was followed by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, who annexed the fort in 1328 and renamed the town Daulatabad ("City of Forts"). In a fit of misguided reasoning, he decided to shift his capital here, and compelled Delhi's entire population to march across 1127 km (700 miles). Thousands died of

starvation or disease along the way, and when the move failed, the sultan and his court marched back to Delhi. Daulatabad was successively conquered by the Deccan Bahmani sultans, the Nizam Shahis, the Mughals, the Marathas and finally the Nizam of Hyderabad – each conquest proving more bloody and savage than the last.

The pyramid-shaped hill on which the imposing fort is built, stands apart from the surrounding ranges, and towers to a height of 183 m (600 ft). This made Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's chronicler note that "neither ant nor snake could scale it". Four solid concentric walls protect the fort. The first of its three zones is **Ambarkot**, the outer fort. Within, stands the 60-m (197-ft) high victory tower **Chand Minar**, built in 1435 by Alaaddin Bahmani to celebrate his conquest of the fort. In the nearby **Jami Masjid**, 106 pillars from Jain and Hindu temples separate the main hall into 25 aisles. A triple gateway studded with iron spikes provides access into **Kataka**,

the inner fort. Gateways lead through fortified walls into the base of the citadel, known as **Balakot**, separated by a moat once infested by crocodiles.

Near the innermost gate lies the blue and white tiled **Chini Mahal**, where the last sultan of Golconda was imprisoned by Aurangzeb in 1687. On a nearby bastion is the enormous bronze cannon, the **Qila Shikhan** or "Fort Breaker". This 6-m (20-ft) long cannon has a splendid ram's head, and Persian inscriptions along its length refer to it as the "Creator of Storms". A series of dark tunnels lead to the heart of the citadel, and end near a pillared pavilion, **Baradari**, a late Mughal building. The fort's ramparts offer sweeping views.

Environs

The walled village of **Khuldabad** ("Heavenly Abode") is 10 km (6 miles) north of Daulatabad. The Alamgir Dargah, dedicated to the Muslim saint, Sayeed Zain-ud-din, (d. 1370), is its most famous monument. Also known as Rauza, this religious complex, established by Sufi saints in the 14th century, was considered so sacred that several Deccan sultans chose to be buried here. Emperor Aurangzeb, who died in the Deccan in 1707, is buried in a simple tomb in the courtyard. The beautiful tomb of Malik Ambar (see p473), is a short distance to the north.



The Chand Minar, once covered in glazed Persian tiles, Daulatabad

Ellora: Kailasanatha Temple ①



Detail, roof of the entrance gateway

The finest of the Ellora group of rock-cut caves is the magnificent Kailasanatha Temple (Cave 16) a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Commissioned by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I in the 8th century, this mammoth complex, spanning 81 m (266 ft) by 47 m (154 ft), was carved

out of a huge rocky cliff face. Sculptors chiseled through 85 000 cubic metres (approximately 3 million cubic ft) of rock, beginning at the top of the cliff and working their way down. The resulting marvel, embellished with huge sculptural panels, was meant to depict Mount Kailasa, the sacred abode of Lord Shiva.



★ The Roof

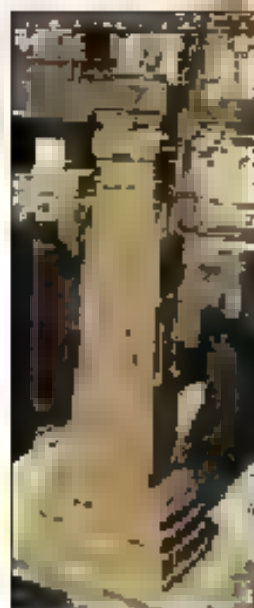
The mandapa (assembly hall) roof is embellished by a lotus carved in concentric rings topped by four stone lions.



Courtyard

On either side of the courtyard are two life-size elephants.

The Nandi Pavilion



Obelisks

Flanking the Nandi Pavilion are two monolithic pillars, 17 m (56 ft) high, with carvings of lotus friezes and garlands.







★ Lakshmi with Elephants

Facing the entrance, the ornate Gajalakshmi panel in the Nandi Pavilion depicts Lakshmi seated in a lotus pond and being bathed by elephants bearing upturned pots in their trunks.



The tower rises 32.6 m (107 ft), and was once covered in white plaster to replicate Mount Kailasa's snowy peaks.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Aurangabad district 30 km (19 miles) NW of Aurangabad
 Jeeps are also available at Aurangabad & tour operators also organize trips.  Tue–Sun, (all caves).   Flash photography is prohibited. Light is best in the afternoon.  Take packed lunch, a torch, wear comfortable shoes and a sun hat.  Ellora Festival (Dec.)



Supporting Elephants

Elephants with lotuses in their trunks are carved all along the lower storey, and appear to support the structure

0 metres 10

 0 yards 10

Rock-cut
monasteries



★ Ravana Shaking Mount Kailasa

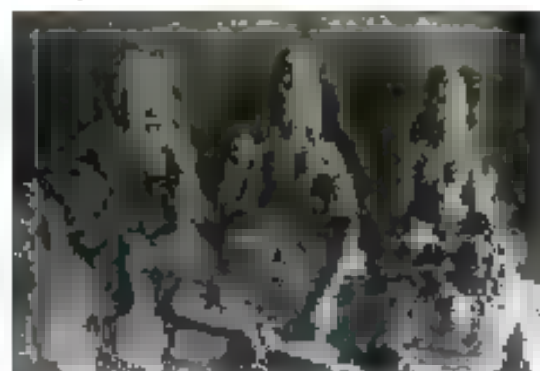
A large panel depicts Ravana (the demon king in the Ramayana) shaking Mount Kailasa in order to disturb Shiva and Parvati in their mountain home



Ramayana panels flank the south wall, while the north wall has *Mahabharata* and Krishna legends.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ The Roof
- ★ Lakshmi with Elephants
- ★ Ravana Shaking Mount Kailasa



Three Goddesses

The Hall of Sacrifice contains life-size images of Durga, Chamunda and Kali, as well as of Ganesha, Parvati, and the seven mother goddesses

Exploring Ellora

The 34 caves at Ellora, hewn from a 2-km (1.3-mile) long escarpment, are among the most splendid examples of rock-cut architecture in India.

The emergence and growing importance of Ellora coincided with the decline of Buddhism, and a Hindu renaissance under the Chalukya and Rashtrakuta dynasties (7th–9th centuries AD). Ellora was situated on an important trade route that ran between Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh and the west coast. It was the revenue from this very lucrative trade that sustained 500 years of excavation at Ellora, as the older Ajanta caves began to be abandoned.

The caves at Ellora fall into three distinct groups – Buddhist, Hindu and Jain – and they are numbered from the southern end. The **Buddhist Caves** (1 to 12), date from the Chalukya period, between the 7th and 8th centuries. The first nine are variations of *ubharas* or monasteries, and are filled with fine Buddha figures, Bodhisattvas and scenes from Buddhist mythology. The most splendid is **Cave 10**, or Vishwakarma, named after the celestial carpenter. A striking *chaitya griha* (see p20), it is dominated by a figure of the Teaching Buddha carved in front of a



View of the dramatic Ellora escarpment with its seasonal waterfall

votive stupa, placed under a vaulted roof. It is so intricately carved that it seems to be made of wood. Other important caves are **Cave 11**, or Do Thal (two-storeyed) and **Cave 12**, or Tin Thal (three-storeyed). The upper hall of Cave 12 has large Bodhisattvas carved on its walls, while rows of seven Buddha figures flank the entrance to the antechamber.

The **Hindu Caves** (13 to 29), were carved out between the 7th and 9th centuries, and represent the peak of Ellora's development. **Cave 14**, or Ravana ki Khai, contains impressive sculptures of deities from the Hindu pantheon, such as Durga slaying the buffalo demon, and Vishnu as the boar-headed Varaha. **Cave 15**, or Dashavatara, also has superb sculptural depictions

Cave 21 or Rameshvara, and **Cave 29** or Dhumar Lena, are other impressive caves.

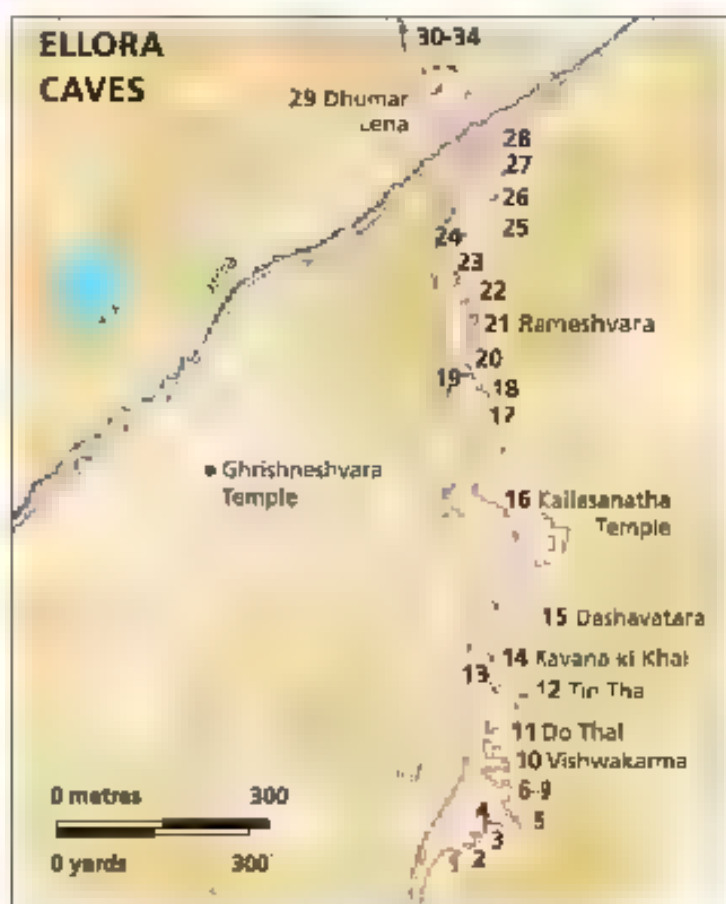
The **Jain Caves** (30 to 34) date from Ellora's last stage, in the 9th century, and are simpler than the Hindu ones. **Cave 32**, or Indra Sabha, is the finest of the group. A monolithic shrine, it has carvings of elephants, lions and *tirthankaras* (see p396) on the courtyard walls. **Cave 30** or Chhota Kailasa, is a small incomplete replica of the Kailasanatha Temple (see pp476–7) and has sculptures of various *tirthankaras* and Mahavira on a lion-throne.

Environs

The 18th-century **Grishneshvara Temple**, nearby, is one of the 12 *pyotirlinga* shrines dedicated to Shiva, built by Rani Ahilyabai of Indore (see p250).



The upper-storey hall, Vishwakarma (Cave 10)





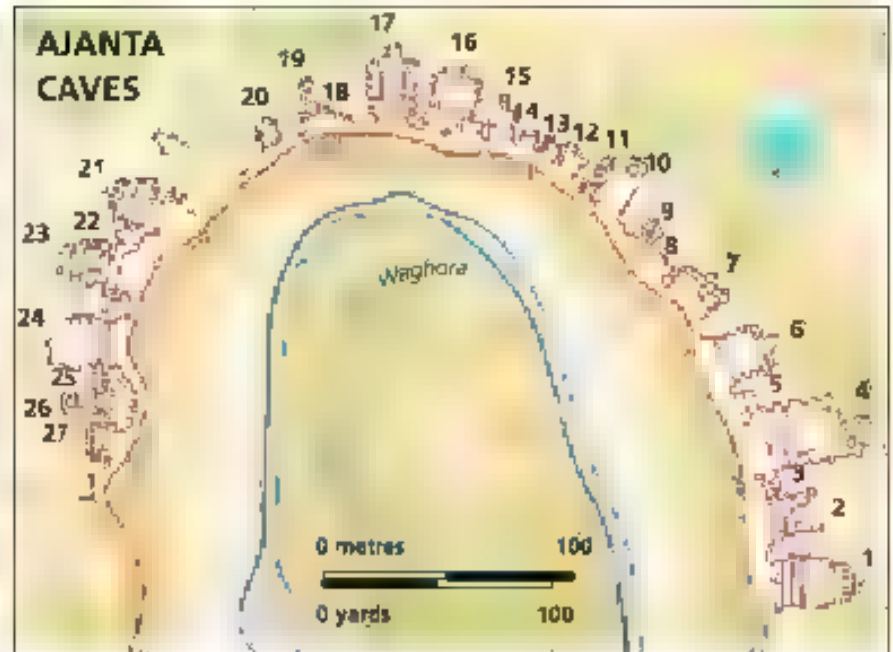
Facade of Cave 19, Ajanta, with a large horseshoe-shaped window

Ajanta ❷

Aurangabad district. 110 km (68 miles) NE of Aurangabad from Aurangabad. Tue–Sun flash photography is prohibited. Organized tours & taxis are also available from Aurangabad. Take a packed lunch, bottled water, torch, and wear comfortable shoes and a sun hat

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the 30 extraordinary rock-cut caves at Ajanta lie within a horseshoe-shaped escarpment, overlooking the narrow Waghora river gorge. At its head is a waterfall that drops into the Saptakunda pool. The caves were occupied for only a short period and, over time, the surrounding jungle concealed their existence. They were “rediscovered” quite accidentally in 1891, when John Smith, of the 28th Madras Cavalry, suddenly saw the top of the facade of Cave 10 while on a tiger hunt.

Ajanta's caves fall into two groups. The early group belongs to the more austere Hinayana phase of Buddhism (2nd–1st century BC), during which the Buddha was not represented in human form but only by symbols such as a Wheel of Law or a Bodhi Tree. The second group dates from the Mahayana period (5th–6th centuries AD), carved out during the rule of the Vakataka dynasty, when artistic expression was more exuberant. The caves were inhabited by monks, artists and craftsmen who used them as *varsh-utikas* or monsoon shrines. Stylistically they are of two



types – *chaitya grihas* (prayer halls) and *viharas* (monasteries). The *chaityas* have vaulted ceilings and octagonal columns that divide the space into a central hall with a votive stupa, the object of veneration. The side aisles that run around the hall were used for ritual circumambulation. The Mahayana *chaityas* also have Buddha images. *Viharas* typically have a verandah, a hall surrounded by cells, and an inner shrine with enormous Buddha figures.

Of the seven Mahayana caves, dating from the 5th century AD, **Cave 1** is famous for its splendid murals (see pp480–81). Above its verandah are friezes of scenes from the Buddha's life, while its ceiling is supported by 20 carved and painted pillars. **Cave 2** has a superb facade carved with images of Naga kings and their attendants (*ganas*), while its main shrine has a magnificent painted ceiling.

Caves 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15 are Hinayana caves. **Cave 9**,

a *chaitya griha*, has a facade adorned with windows and lattice-work. The large Buddha figures along the sides were a later addition (5th century) and its murals are from both periods. **Cave 10** is thought to be Ajanta's oldest cave and is one of its finest *chaitya grihas*.

Caves 15 to 20 are late 5th-century Mahayana caves.

Cave 16 has sculptures of beautiful maidens flanking the doorway, while in

Cave 17 the entrance to the inner shrine is ornamented with Buddha figures, goddesses and lotuses.

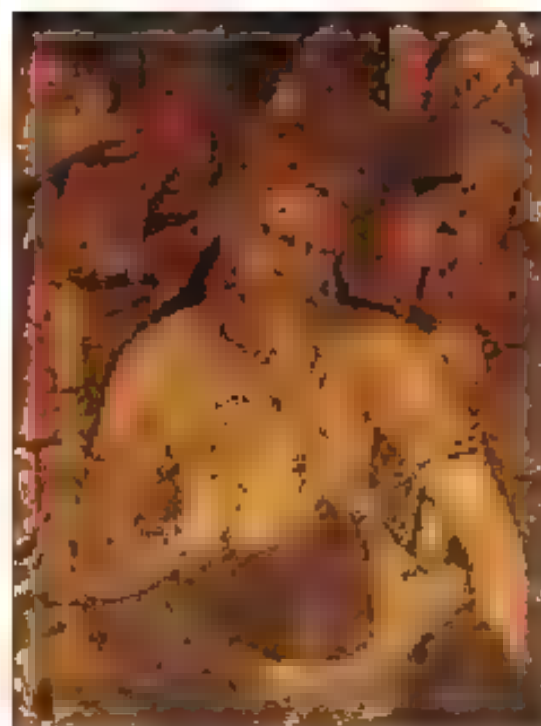
Caves 21 to 27 (7th century), make up the final group. **Cave 26** displays the full magnificence of Ajanta's sculptural art. Especially remarkable are two splendid panels – one depicts the Temptation of the Buddha by the Demon Mara, while the **Parinirvana** is a 7-m (23-ft) image of the reclining Buddha, with his eyes closed as if in sleep. His cascades mourn his passing, while above, celestial beings rejoice in his salvation.



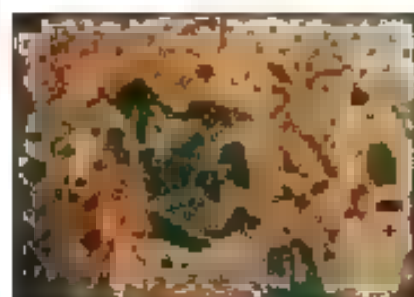
The moving Parinirvana, depicting the passing of the Buddha, Cave 26

The Ajanta Murals

The earliest and finest examples of Buddhist painting in India can be seen at the Ajanta caves. Executed between the 2nd century BC and the 5th century AD, the murals show scenes from the Buddha's life and from the Jataka Tales, which recount stories of the Buddha's previous incarnations as an enlightened being or Bodhisattva. Magnificent, detailed compositions, the murals include depictions of court scenes, princes and musicians, and offer fascinating glimpses of daily life in the 5th century. The colours, derived from plants and minerals, are in rich shades of ochre, lime, black, green and lapis lazuli.



Padmapani (Lotus-Holder), the Bodhisattva of Compassion, can be seen on the wall to the left of the antechamber doorway. He is surrounded by celestial beings and air-borne figures.

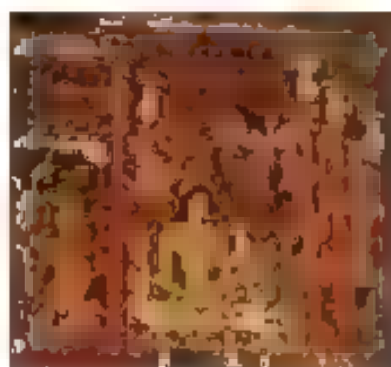


A scene depicting a king, possibly the Vakataka ruler Harisena, greeting a Persian embassy.

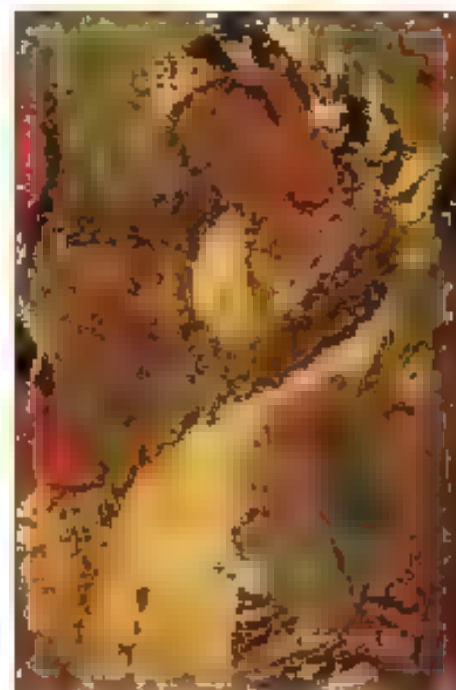
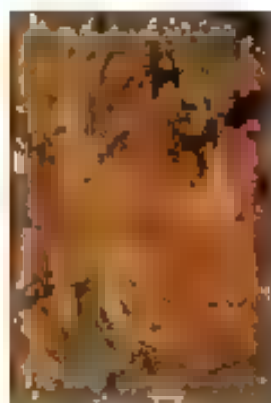
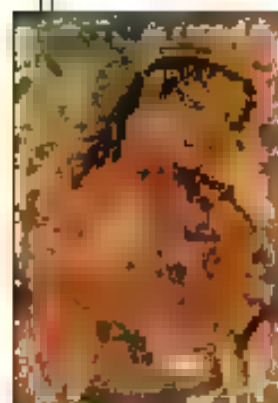
CAVE 1

This late 5th-century vihara (monastery) contains some of Ajanta's most evocative murals.

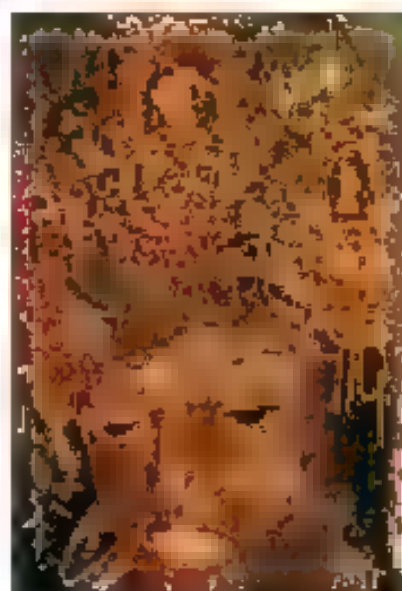
The Miracle of Sravasti. on the antechamber's right wall, depicts a famous miracle when the Buddha multiplied himself a thousand-fold.



Scenes from the Mahajanaka Jataka. from left to right, depict Prince Mahajanaka, Queen Shivali enticing the prince, palace maids, and a dancing girl.



The Mahajanaka Jataka. to the left of the antechamber recounts the life of Prince Mahajanaka who renounced the world to become an ascetic. Here, the prince is surrounded by female attendants.

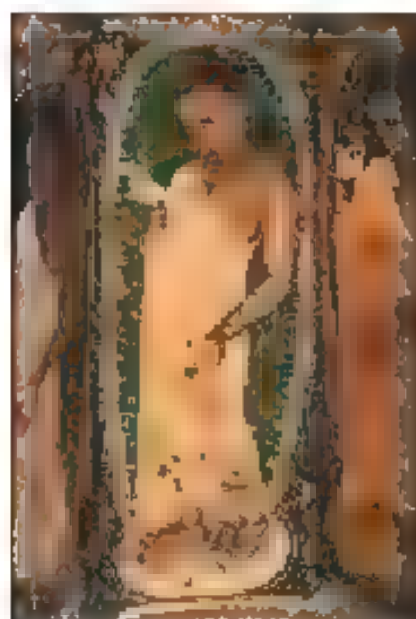


Avalokitesvara, also identified as Vajrapani, is the most venerated Bodhisattva in the Mahayana pantheon, and can be seen to the right of the antechamber doorway.

**CAVE 2**

Similar in design to Cave 1, this 5th-century *vihara* is profusely painted in lustrous colours. The walls, columns, capitals and ceiling are covered in scrollwork, geometric and floral patterns, and numerous *Jataka* panels, including stories connected with the Buddha's birth.

The large mandala (circular diagram) dominates the elaborately painted ceiling of this remarkable cave. A depiction of the cosmos, its outer ring is filled with lotus motifs.

**CAVE 10**

Considered to be Ajanta's oldest cave, this *chaitya griha* dates to the 2nd century BC. The left wall has its oldest mural, a frieze depicting a prince worshipping a Bodhi Tree.

CAVE 16

Outstanding paintings in this cave depict the conversion of Nanda, the Buddha's half-brother, and show his wife swooning when she hears the news of his becoming a monk.



Nanda's wife, Sundari, fainting upon hearing of his conversion

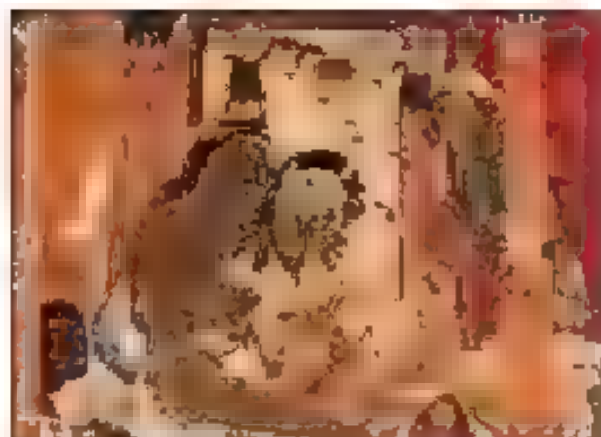
Numerous figures of the Buddha embellish some of the octagonal pillars (39 in all) that separate the aisles from the central nave in Cave 10.

CAVE 17

This cave has the largest number of paintings. Among the finest are a vast panel depicting Simhala's shipwreck and encounter with a man-eating ogress, and a lady at her toilet, gazing intently into a mirror.



Eight seated Buddha figures are depicted above the doorway, in the verandah, with a row of amorous couples directly below them.



A panel from the *Visvantara Jataka*, to the left of the doorway, depicts Prince Visvantara and his wife drinking wine. They then move to the city gate and give alms to the needy.

This detail of an *apsara* (celestial maiden) adoring the Buddha is part of a larger mural on the verandah to the right of the door. The Ajanta murals are renowned for their exquisite portrayal of women.





The enormous meteorite crater at Lonar, partially filled by a lake

Lonar 15

Buldana district, 130 km (81 miles) E of Aurangabad Jalna, 83 km (52 miles) W of Lonar, then bus from Aurangabad, taxis also available

The tiny village of Lonar, is famous for its remarkable meteorite crater. Thought to be the only hyper-velocity impact crater in basaltic rock in the world, the mammoth crater 2 km (1.3 miles) in diameter and 700 m (2,297 ft) deep, is estimated to be about 50,000 years old. Scientists believe that the meteorite is still buried beneath the southeastern edge of the crater. A lake fills the bottom and the ruins of some Hindu temples stand on its shores. The crater is rich in birdlife, and monkeys and herds of deer can also be seen. There are a few rest houses that offer rooms and the village has some eateries as well.

Melghat Tiger Reserve 16

Amravati district, 400 km (249 miles) NE of Aurangabad Amravati, 100 km (62 miles) SE of entry point. Maharashtra Tourism, organizes buses or jeeps from Amravati to the park. For bookings contact the Field Director, (0721) 266 2792 Dec-May

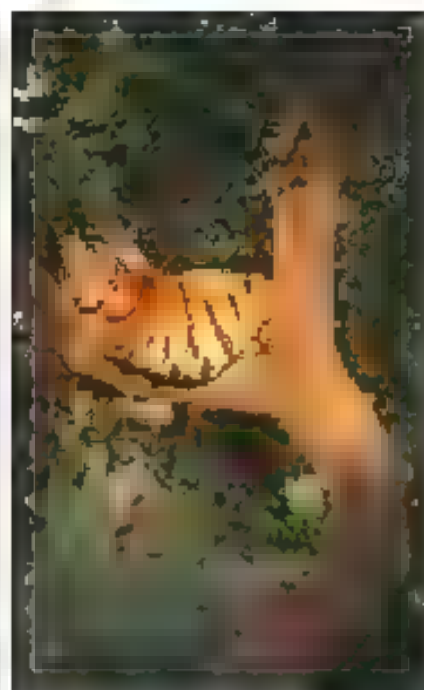
The Project Tiger Reserve of Melghat, which means "Meeting Place of the Ghats", spreads across the Gawilgarh Hills in the southern part of the Satpura Mountains. Its highest altitudes are approximately 1,178 m (3,865 ft) above sea level. These hills have a dense canopy of the country's finest deciduous

teak and bamboo forests, which are now threatened by rampant commercial exploitation for timber. Along with its elusive 73 tigers, the reserve is home to about 80 leopards, *chausingha* (four-horned antelope), *dhole* (Indian wild dog), jungle cats, hyenas and a rich variety of birds. The sanctuary also supports the state's largest concentration of *gaur*, the endangered Indian bison.

The best time to visit is between January and April, when the park is pleasantly cool. Its five rivers, the Khandu, Khapra, Sipra, Garga and Dorat, dry out in summer and the few remaining pools of rainwater are highly prized as watering holes.

Environs

Chikhaldhara, lying 25 km (16 miles) northeast of Melghat, is a quaint hill station established by the British in 1839.



A tiger resting in a tree at the Melghat Tiger Reserve

Nagpur 17

Nagpur district, 520 km (323 miles) NE of Aurangabad 2,051,500 10 km (6 miles) S of city centre, then bus or taxi Maharashtra Tourism, (0712) 253 3325 Pola (Jun-Jul), Kalidasa Festival (Nov)

Situated on the banks of the Nag river, Nagpur was the capital of the Central Provinces until it became part of Maharashtra state after Independence. It is a fast developing industrial city lying on India's main north-south railway line and is also the country's orange-growing capital. Historically, it was the capital of the aboriginal Gond tribals until it was captured by the Maratha Bhonsles (see p468) in 1740, and finally by the British in 1861.

In October 1956, the city witnessed an event of great social importance, when Dr BR Ambedkar, writer of the Indian Constitution and a freedom fighter born into a lower caste Hindu family, converted to Buddhism in a stand against the rigid Hindu caste system. Nearly 200,000 people followed him, and the movement gathered great momentum, resulting in about three million conversions.

Nagpur town is built around **Sitabaldi Fort**, which is encircled by a deep moat. It is open to the public only on 26 January and 15 August. In the eastern part of the city are the remains of the **Bhonsle Palace**, which was destroyed by fire in 1864. South of the old city lie the **Chhatris**, or memorials of the Bhonsle kings, while a number of colonial buildings are situated in the western part of Nagpur. Among the most noteworthy are the High Court (1737-42) and the Anglican Cathedral of All Saints (1851).

Environs

Ramtek, 40 km (25 miles) northeast of Nagpur, is associated with the 14-year exile of Rama, Sita and Lakshman, as told in the epic *Ramayana* (see p27). It was the capital of the Vakataka dynasty between the 4th and the 6th centuries, and the fort on the Hill of



Baskets of juicy oranges on sale in Nagpur's thriving market

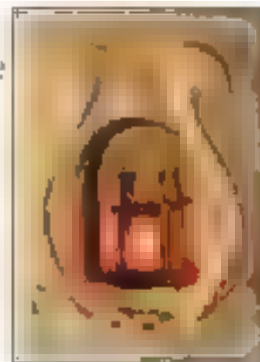
Rama dates to this period. Its walls, however, were built in 1740, by the founder of Nagpur's Bhonsle dynasty, Raghoji I. There are also temples dedicated to Rama and Sita, dating to the 5th century.

Wardha ●

Wardha district, 493 km (306 miles) NW of Aurangabad. from Nagpur to Wardha, then bus or auto to Sevagram. **Tel** (07152) 284 753

Most visitors to Wardha are en route to Mahatma Gandhi's historic **Sevagram Ashram**, now a national institution, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Wardha town. Established by Gandhi in 1933, Sevagram ("Village of Service") was based on Gandhi's philosophy of rural economic development. It became the headquarters of India's National

Movement, where Gandhi lived and worked for more than 15 years. Spread over 40 ha (99 acres) of farmland, the ashram has numerous *kutirs* or rural dwellings and several research centres. Gandhi's personal effects, such as his spinning wheel and spectacles, are on display, and khadi, the coarse home-spun cotton that Gandhi made famous as the symbol of India's freedom struggle, is also on sale. A photo exhibit opposite the main entrance depicts scenes from Gandhi's life, while a hospital catering to the needs of local villagers, is located on the main road. Prayers are held daily at 4.30am and 6pm under a pipal tree planted by Gandhi, which visitors can attend.



An oil lamp in a niche, Sevagram

point of a sacred pilgrimage which draws thousands of Varakans (members of one of the state's most popular religious sects) here every July to attend the Ashadh Ekadashi fair. *Dindis* or group processions travel to Pandharpur from every village in the area accompanied by devotional singing. The river front, lined with numerous bathing ghats, comes alive with crowds of people, who gather here for their ritual dip.

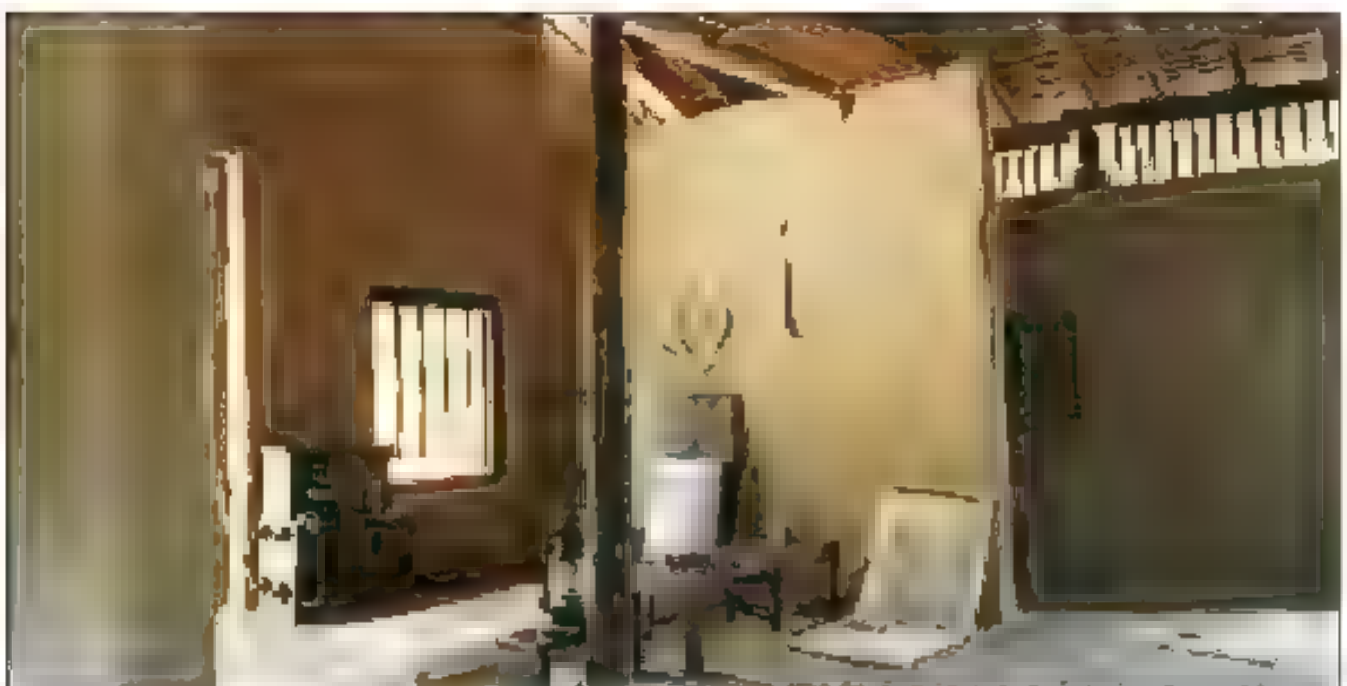
Environs

The ashram of Gandhi's disciple, Vinobha Bhave, is 10 km (6 miles) north of Sevagram at **Paunar**. Bhave started the successful Bhoodan Movement (which literally means "land donation") that sought to persuade wealthy landowners to give portions of their holdings to the poor.

Pandharpur ●

Sholapur district, 250 km (155 miles) SE of Pune. 91 500 Ashadh Ekadashi Fair (Jul)

The spiritual capital of Maharashtra, Pandharpur is situated on the banks of the Chandrabhaga river and is the site of the sacred shrine of Vitthoba, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The temple was built in 1228 and is the focal



The spartan interior of Mahatma Gandhi's ashram at Sevagram, near Wardha



GOA

This tiny state, along the Konkani Coast, covers 3,702 sq km (1,429 sq miles) and consists of just two districts: North and South Goa. Goa's distinct culture is a legacy of its colonial past. In 1510, Alfonso de Albuquerque established a small but powerful Portuguese enclave here. Though Goa became a part of the Indian Union in 1961, evidence of the 400-odd years of Portuguese rule is still apparent in the people's dress, language, religion and cuisine, and in their music, a fusion of the

plaintive *fado* with the lilting rhythms of local Konkani folk songs. Today, Goa is one of India's most popular holiday destinations, with its idyllic beaches, lush paddy fields, coconut plantations and villages dotted with pretty white-washed churches and grand mansions. Its other attractions include the Hindu temples around Ponda, built between the 15th and 18th centuries, and the magnificent cathedrals of Old Goa. Goa's friendly, easy-going people go out of their way to make visitors feel at home.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- Mapusa ③
- Margao ⑬
- Panaji ⑤
- Pernem ②

Churches, Seminaries & Temples

- Pilar ⑪
- Ponda ⑫
- Rachol ⑭
- Reis Magos ⑧
- Tambdi Surla ⑮

Historic Sites

- A Walk through Old Goa ⑩
- Terekhol Fort ⑨
- Braganza House ⑩

Beaches & Beach Towns

- Anjuna ②
- Arambol ①
- Calangute ①
- Cavelossim ⑧
- Colva ⑬
- Palolem ⑮
- Vagator ⑥



Panaji ①

Goa's capital, Panaji, situated at the mouth of the Mandovi river, is reminiscent of a provincial Mediterranean town. Earlier a port of the Adil Shahi kings of Bijapur (*see pp542*), it became a military landing stage and warehouse after the arrival of the Portuguese in 1510. In 1759, after a series of epidemics in Old Goa, the viceroy was forced to move his residence to Panaji or Panjim as it was then called. However, it was only in 1843 that the town became the official capital of Portuguese territories in India. Today, Panaji has a relaxed and friendly ambience, especially along the leafy avenues of the old town (*see pp488-9*). The newer commercial hub, laid out on a grid, has concrete structures interspersed with colonial buildings and churches.

Secretariat

Avenida Dom João Crasto **Tel** (0832) 222 2701 ☐ Mon-Fri

The river front Secretariat housing the State Legislative Assembly, is one of Panaji's oldest buildings. It was once the summer palace of Yusuf Adil Shah, Goa's 16th-century Muslim ruler, and fell to the Portuguese in 1510, despite a formidable battery of 55 cannons and a salt-water moat that protected it.

Rebuilt in 1615, its strategic location made it a point of entry for ships and a stopover for viceroys and governors en route to Old Goa (*see pp501*). In 1760, after Old Goa was abandoned in favour of Panaji, the Idalcao's Palace (a corruption of Adil Shah's or Khan's Palace), as it was then

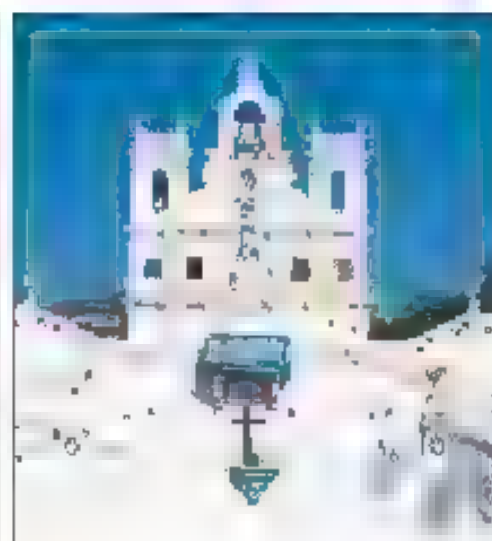
known, became the official residence of the viceroys – until 1918, when the residence moved to the Cabo Palace southwest of Panaji. Extensive renovations have transformed the original Islamic structure into the colonial building it is today, with a sloping tiled roof, wide wooden verandahs and cast-iron pillars. The Ashoka Chakra and the Buddhist Wheel of Law, the emblems of the Indian government, have replaced the

Portuguese viceroys' coat of arms, above the entrance to the building.

Standing west of the Secretariat is the arresting statue of Abbé de Faria. This Goan priest, who was born in Candolim in 1756, underwent theological training in Rome. After his ordination, he moved



The 19th-century statue of Abbé de Faria



The Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

to Paris, where he won acclaim as the father of modern hypnosis.

Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

Church Square **Tel** (0832) 242 6939

☐ daily ☒ (English) Barn, Mon-Sat, 8-30am, Sun

Overlooking Largo da Igreja or 'Church Square', Panaji's main square, is the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the town's most important landmark. Portuguese sailors used to come to the original chapel, consecrated in 1541, to offer thanksgiving prayers after their long and treacherous voyage from Lisbon.

The present church, with its Baroque façade framed by twin towers, was built in 1619. Its most striking feature, the double flight of stairs leading up to the church, was added in 1871. The central pediment was built at the same




View of the the riverside Secretariat at Panaji, with its tiled roof and colonial façade

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp709-11 and pp737-8

time, as was the bedfry to accommodate the huge bell brought from Old Goa's Augustinian monastery (see p496). The chapel in the south transept has fine reredos (altar panels) retrieved from the viceroy's chapel in the Secretariat. The Baroque splendour of the main altar and the two transept altars is in sharp contrast to the otherwise simple interior.

Menezes Braganza Institute

Malaca Rd. **Tel** (0832) 222 4143  Mon-Fri

An excellent example of 19th-century Portuguese civic architecture, the Institute Vasco da Gama was built to impart knowledge in the arts and sciences. It was later renamed after the philanthropist Luis de Menezes Braganza (1878-1948), whose family home is in Chandor (see p508).

Today this is Goa's Central Library, with a good collection of rare books. The superb mural in blue painted ceramic tiles (*azulejos*) was added to the entrance lobby in 1935, and depicts scenes from the epic *Os Lusíadas* (Lusiada, meaning the "people of Portugal", is derived from Lusitania, Portugal's old name). Written by the 16th-century Portuguese poet, Luis Vaz de Camões, this recounts the history of the Portuguese presence in Goa. The institute used to have an art gallery with works by late 19th- and early 20th-century European

artists. These exhibits are now housed in the State Museum.

The grassy square in front of the Institute, **Azad Maidan**, is lined on one side by the Police Headquarters, built in 1832 with stones from Old Goa's abandoned buildings. The pavilion in the centre was made in 1847, using Corinthian pillars taken from a Domini-

can church, dating to the mid-16th century. Inside, a memorial to the freedom fighter Dr Instao de Braganza Cunha has replaced an earlier statue of the first viceroy, Alfonso de Albuquerque, now

in the Archaeological Museum in Old Goa (see p500).

State Museum

Patto **Tel** (0832) 243 8006






 Mon-Fri  public hols

This museum houses a rather modest collection of pre-colonial artifacts, including statues, *sati* stones, antique furniture and carvings from



The central pavilion, Azad Maidan

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

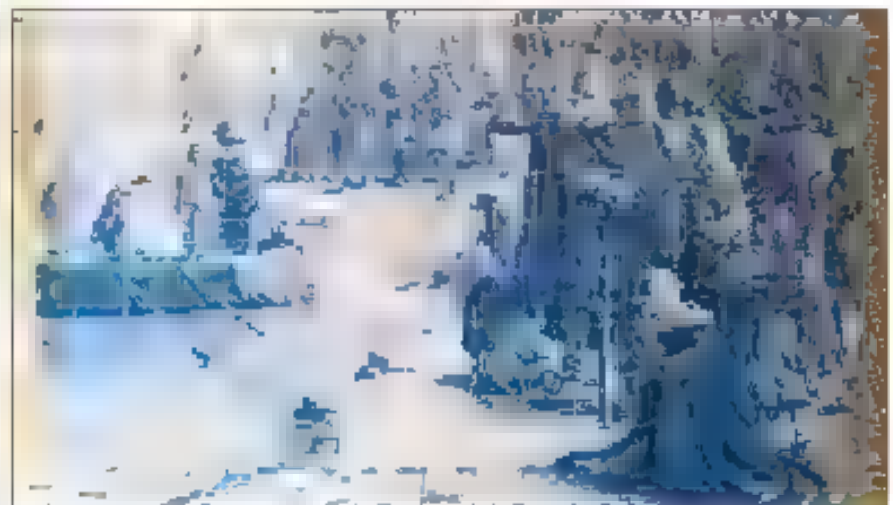
North Goa district (Tiswad taluka) 588 km (365 miles) S of Mumbai  58,800  Dabolim, 30 km (19 miles) S of town centre, then bus or taxi.  Margao, 33 km (21 miles) SE of town centre.  GTDC Thonora Apartments, (0832) 222 6515  Feast of Our Lady (Dec), Carnival (Feb).

ravaged Hindu temples, as well as some Christian icons.

Environs

Panaji's nearest beach

Miramar is 3 km (2 miles) west. **Dona Paula**, 7 km (4 miles) southwest of Panaji, is near the headland dividing the estuaries of the Zuan and Mandovi rivers. It is named after a viceroy's daughter who, the story goes, jumped into the sea when she wasn't allowed to marry a local fisherman. The jetty offers fine views of Fort Aguada across the bay. Jet skis are available for rent and visitors can also take a ferry-ride to Vasco da Gama harbour.



A scene from *Os Lusíadas*, depicting Vasco da Gama's arrival in Goa

GOAN RIVER CRUISES

A delightful way to spend an evening in Goa is to take one of the many sunset cruises along the Mandovi river, organized by the Goa Tourism Development Corporation, (0832) 222 6 28, and also by private operators. Most of the cruises begin from the jetty at the foot of Mandovi bridge, every day between 6 and 7pm.

(tickets are available at the jetty). Entertainment is provided by troupes of Goan dancers and musicians. On full moon nights, an excellent dinner is also provided on board. Some operators, such as Sea Adventure, (0832) 255 0705, organize specialized tours through the backwaters, a vibrant mangrove habitat and home to marsh crocodiles and migratory birds. Focussing on culture and food, Spice Villages, (0832) 234 4268, takes visitors to the sylvan settings of spice plantations, which attract flocks of beautiful birds.



An evening cruise down the Mandovi river

Street-by-Street: Panaji Old Town

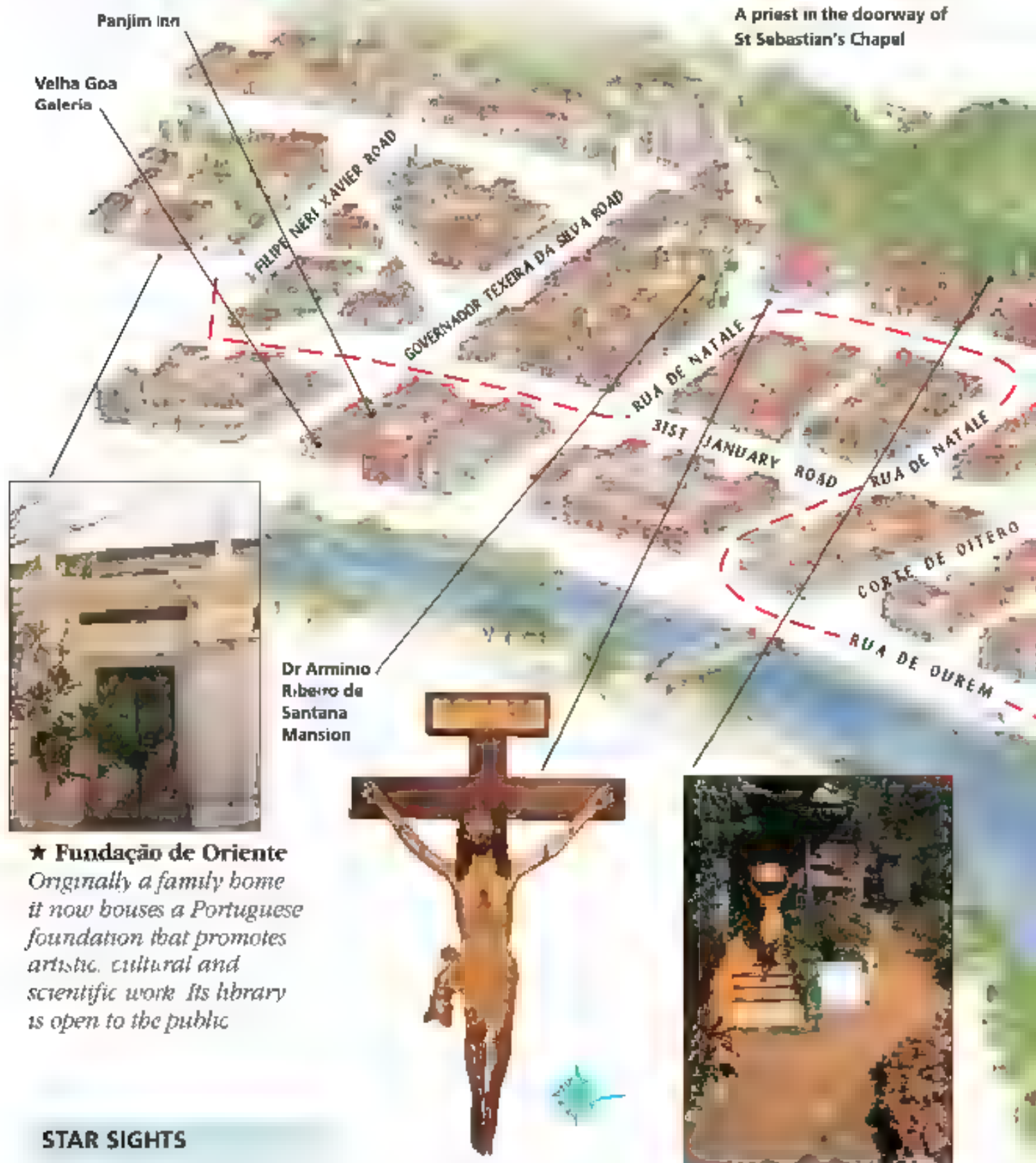


Terracotta
medallion

Tucked away between Ourem Creek and Altinho Hill in Panaji are the old residential quarters of Fontainhas and São Tomé, built on reclaimed land in the 19th century. Fontainhas was named after the fountain of Phoenix, a spring that provided the quarter's only source of water, while São Tomé takes its name from the São Tomé Church. This old-world precinct, characterized by a jumble of painted, tile-roofed houses, has streets lined with taverns offering authentic Goan cuisine and *ferri* (cashewnut liqueur), and bakeries serving *bebimca*, the delicious local cake. Many of the residents still speak Portuguese.



A priest in the doorway of
St Sebastian's Chapel



★ **Fundação de Oriente**
Originally a family home it now houses a Portuguese foundation that promotes artistic, cultural and scientific work. Its library is open to the public.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Fundação de Oriente
- ★ St Sebastian's Chapel
- ★ Rua de Natale

★ **St Sebastian's Chapel**
The chapel, built in 1888, has a life-size crucifix that used to hang in the Palace of the Inquisition in Old Goa.

★ **Rua de Natale**
This road snakes up Altinho Hill and has steps laid out to help pedestrians negotiate the gentle climb.



Ourem Creek

The picturesque Rua de Ourem faces Ourem Creek. Behind it, colourful houses dot the slopes all the way up Altinho Hill.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Fontainhas & São Tomé St
 Sebastian's Chapel ☐ am only
 São Tomé Church ☐ am only
 Fundação de Oriente Library
 Tel (0832) 243 6108. ☐ Sun-Fri
 Velha Goa Galeria Tel (0832)
 242 6628. ☐ Mon-Sat.



Venite Restaurant

This first floor restaurant, overlooking the street below, has a wonderful ambience and serves excellent European and Goan food.

Altinho Hill

KEY

--- Suggested route



São Tomé a tiny church built in 1849 was once the focus of a busy square. The nearby Mint marks the Inquisition's execution site.



Streetscape

Most houses are painted yellow, ochre, green or indigo with a white trim – in keeping with the old Portuguese building code.



Reredos behind the main altar, Reis Magos Church

Reis Magos ②

North Goa district (Bardez taluka)
3 km (2 miles) NW of Panaji

 *Feast of Three Kings Jan.*

The fort at Reis Magos as built in 1551 by Don Alfonso de Noronha, the fifth viceroy as a second line of defence after the forts at Agtada and Cabo (the tip of Dona Paula). It once housed a prison, which was moved to Mormugao in 1996. Adjacent to the fort is the Reis Magos Church. Constructed in 1555, this is one of Goa's earliest churches and has the royal Portuguese coat of arms on its façade.



Soccer game in progress, Calangute

day, it is packed with sun-bathers, hawkers, masseurs, hair-brainers and ear-cleaners. The entire stretch of sand right up to the adjacent Baga Beach is lined with resorts, trinket stalls, bars and beach shacks such as Reggie's Bar and Souza Lobo (see

p738), which serve excellent Goan food. **Atlantis Water Sports** offers a diverse range of water sports. Rides on fishing boats are also available at bargain prices. Calangute's church, **St Alex**, topped by a large dome, is on

the road to Mapusa. Its Rococo-style white-and-gold interior has pretty, shell-shaped niches.

 **Atlantis Water Sports**
Calangute. Tel 09890-47272

Enviros

Extending north of Calangute, **Baga Beach** is far less crowded although its expanse of soft, white sand has its share of

guesthouses and bars. It hosts the leisurely Saturday Night Ingo's Bazaar — a great alternative to the Wednesday market at nearby Anjuna. Tito's Bar, which has the only dance floor on the entire beach, is the hub of Baga's nightlife. **Candolim Beach**, 2.5 km (2 miles) south of Calangute, stretches all the way to Fort Agtada. Popular with large tour groups, the once peaceful waters now resound with the whirr of speedboats and jet skis. **Saligao**, 2 km (1.3 miles) east of Calangute, has the pretty Church of Mae de Deus, in Neo-Gothic style, as well as a seminary which prepares boys for theological studies at Ramol Seminary (see p504).

Anjuna ④

North Goa district (Bardez taluka)
18 km (11 miles) NW of Panaji

 *Flea Market (Wed).*

Anjuna has now replaced Calangute as a haven for backpackers. It is better known for its full-moon rave parties and sprawling flea market than for its beach. The popular market, held every Wednesday, is crowded with hawkers from all over India selling everything from Balinese batik, silver jewellery and papier-mâché boxes to Tibetan prayer wheels, Rajasthan mirrorwork and Kerala woodcarvings. Fluorescent rave gear and trendy beachwear round off the selection, while added attractions are performing monkeys and fortune-telling Nandi bulls.

Calangute ③

North Goa district (Bardez taluka) 16 km (10 miles) NW of Panaji

  *GTDC Tourist Resort, 40832 227 6024*

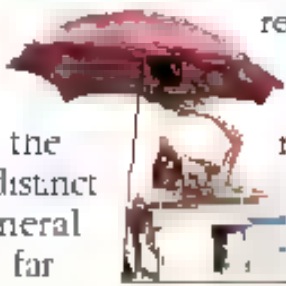
The centre of the hippie scene in the 1960s and 1970s, Calangute is Goa's most popular beach. During the



A woman selling sarongs at the Anjuna flea market

Beaches and Beach Life

Goa's splendid beaches stretch over 106 km (66 miles), from Querim in the north to Mobor in the south. Each beach has its distinct character, though in general South Goa's beaches are far less developed than those in North Goa, and have only



Visitor under a beach umbrella

recently become popular as tourist destinations. To cater to the growing number of visitors, many beaches now have shacks serving beer, snacks and seafood, lively flea markets, and vendors offering a variety of services from head massages to dolphin-watching trips.

Querim, close to Terkhol, is a lovely unspoiled stretch of sand.

Arambol, an idyllic peaceful beach with fishing boats, has a picturesque freshwater lagoon that is fed by hot springs (see p493).

Terekho Fort (see p493).

Querim (see p493).

Arambol

Mandrem (see p492).

Morgim (see p492).

Baga, an extension of Calangute, Goa's most developed beach, has lots of activity with numerous bars, resorts and shacks, and some lively night spots.

Vagator (see p492).

Anjuna

Baga,
Calangute,
Candolim

Sinquerim

Fort Aguada

Dona Paula (see p487).

Vainguinim

Vainguinim has facilities for sailing, wind surfing, water-skiing, parasailing, canoeing and scuba diving, as well as motor boats and jet skis for hire.

Siridao, a small secluded beach a short drive from Panaji, is strewn with pretty seashells.

Sinquerim, extending up to the ramparts of Fort Aguada, has three luxury hotels situated on its sands. A few reliable operators offer a range of water sports facilities as well as boat trips.

Bogmallo, safe for swimming, is an ideal family beach with adequate facilities for water sports (see p507).

Majorda (see p507).

Colva

Benaulim (see p507).

Colva has one of Goa's longest uninterrupted stretches of sand, backed by shady palms. It is the most popular of South Goa's beaches, and has a busy market square and a number of bars and seafood cafés (see p507).

Varca (see p507).

Cavelossim (see p507).

Mobor (see p507).

Cabo da Rama (see p507).

Agonda (see p507).

Palolem

Palolem's crescent-shaped beach, the loveliest in South Goa, offers dolphin-watching trips and delf houses for rent. The sunset views here are spectacular (see p507).

0 km 5
0 miles 5





The façade of St Jerome's Church (Our Lady of Miracles), Mapusa

Mapusa ⑤

North Goa district (Bardez taluka, 13 km (8 miles) N of Panaji)

☎ 40, 150 📍 🚗 GTDC Hotel, (0832) 226 2794 📅 Fr 🎉 Feast of Our Lady of Miracles (Apr.)

The largest town in northern Goa, Mapusa's main point of interest is the colourful Friday market, with its tantalizing aromas of dried fish, spices, chillies, vinegar, local toddy and the spicy Goan sausages, *chouriço*. The region's famous cashewnuts are also much in demand. Hawkers peddle a range of beachwear, including cheap T-shirts and summer dresses, in the covered colonnades in front of the rows of shops. In the lanes leading off from the main market are stalls selling handicrafts and souvenirs from all over the country.

St Jerome's Church, also known as the Church of Our Lady of Miracles, was rebuilt twice, first in 1719 and again in 1838 after it was destroyed by fire. Its main altar, with the image of Nossa Senhora de Milagres, has some grand ornamental screens, salvaged from a church in Old Goa.

Interestingly, both Hindus and Catholics celebrate the Feast of Our Lady (held 16 days after Easter) with equal fervour. At the end of the festival Hindu devotees, accompanied by Catholics, take the holy oil from St

Jerome's church back to the nearby Shanten Temple.

Environs

Mayem Lake, 14 km (9 miles) southeast of Mapusa, is an ideal picnic spot, with boating facilities and a good resort.

Vagator ⑥

North Goa district (Bardez taluka, 17 km (11 miles) N of Panaji)

📍 Chapora village

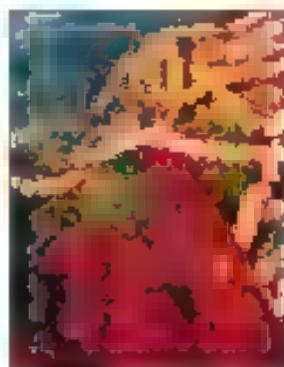
A beautiful bay sheltered by rocky outcrops at both ends, Vagator consists of a number of small beaches fringed by shady coconut palms. Rarely crowded, it is the perfect place to discover Goa's unspoilt beauty.

The southernmost cove of **Ozran** lies below a steep cliff where a freshwater stream empties into a clear pool, ideal for swimming. **Little Vagator**, to the

north, is a secluded stretch of sand, popular with more discerning visitors.

Big Vagator Beach is dominated by the red laterite **Chapora Fort**, situated on top of a hill at its northern tip. Now in ruins, this fort was built by the Portuguese in 1717 on the remains

of an older bastion erected by the Adil Shahi sultans. Its name, Chapora, is derived from "Shahpura" or "Town of the Shah" as the village was once known. In 1739, Sambhaj, the son of the Maratha chief Shivaji, (see p471), occupied the fort for a short time until it was returned to the Portuguese.



Brightly coloured fishing nets

in exchange for Bassein, near Mumbai. Its ramparts, now desolate, offer sweeping views of the coast. Chapora village, below the fort, has many pleasant cafés.

Environs

The many fishing villages along the northern coastline can only be reached by taking a ferry across the Chapora river from Siolim, 10 km (6 miles) from Chapora village. The area around the village of **Morgim**, 5 km (3 miles) north of Chapora village, is ideal for birdwatching. **Mandrem** is another quiet village with a beautiful location and glorious beach, 12 km (7 miles) north of Chapora village.

Pernem ⑦

North Goa district (Pernem taluka, 29 km (18 miles) N of Panaji)

📍 🚗 every half hour from Siolim

The headquarters of Goa's northernmost taluka, or sub-district, Pernem was occupied by the Portuguese in the mid-18th century. It was one of the last conquests they made between 1764 and 1788 – a period during which they expanded their territory to include Pernem, Bicholim and Satari in the north, and Ponda (see p502), Sanquém, Quepem and Canacona in the south. By this time, the fervour for conversions that existed during the period of the early conquests had waned, and these areas remained predominantly Hindu.

The brightly painted **Bhagavati Temple**, in the bazaar, stands on a 500-year-old site, although the present



Shack restaurant on Morgim Beach, a common sight in Goa





A fisherman casting his net at Querim Beach

structure dates to the 18th century. It is dedicated to the eight-armed Bhagavati, an incarnation of Shiva's consort Parvati. Its elaborate gateway is framed by two life-size elephants. A short distance from the bazaar is the palatial **Deshprabhu House**, the 19th-century mansion of the wealthy Hindu Deshprabhu family, who fought for Goa's liberation in 1961. This sprawling property, built around 16 courtyards, has a private temple and a museum displaying family portraits and antiques.

 **Deshprabhu House**
Tel (0832) 220 1234 to arrange a visit

Arambol ③

North Goa district (Pernem taluka)
50 km (31 miles) N of Panaji
  every half hour from Siolim

Also known as Harmal, Arambol is the only fishing village in North Goa that has some basic facilities for visitors. Situated along one of Goa's less commercial beaches, it still retains all the charm of a traditional fishing village, except for the occasional gypsy selling bright scarves




A holy cross on top of a knoll, Arambol Beach

and skirts. Unlike in central Goa, the Hindu influence is apparent here; the numerous cafes and guesthouses are called Ganesha or Namaste instead of Pete's or Johnny's.

At the northern end, a rocky footpath leads to a second beach, entirely surrounded by cliffs. This sandy cove has a freshwater lagoon fed by hot springs and lined with sulphurous mud. A 5-km (3-mile) long path, heading north, leads to **Querim Beach** (pronounced "keri") – a pristine strip of white sand, backed by casuarina trees.

Terekhol Fort ②

North Goa district (Pernem taluka)
42 km (26 miles) N of Panaji
 every half hour from Querim

Across the Terekhol river from Querim is the little hamlet of Terekhol, with Terekhol (Tiracol) Fort, situated on a plateau above it. The early 18th-century fort was captured by the Portuguese in 1776 from the Bhonsles, a Maratha clan. It was the scene of an uprising in 1954, when a group of *satyagrahis* (freedom fighters) hoisted the Indian flag on its ramparts in an act of civil disobedience against colonial rule. The fort's high battlements face the sea, looking across the waters to Fort Aguada, Arambol, and Chapora. The tiny chapel within the fort, with a statue of Christ in the courtyard, is usually closed but the atmospheric Terekhol Fort Heritage Hotel (see p 711) offers some excellent views



Carnival king on a float

FESTIVALS OF GOA

Jatra (Jan), Quepem. A colourful festival (*jatra*) honouring local temple deities is celebrated at the Shantadurga Temple (see p 502). Other such festivals take place through the year at various temples in Ponda.
Carnival (Feb), Panaji. Goa's grandest festival marks the beginning of Lent. "King Momo", who personifies fun and frolic, orders his subjects to forget their troubles, and leads a colourful parade through the streets. Three days and nights of non-stop revelry follow.



Masked dancers, Carnival

Shigmotsav (Shigmo) (Mar). This joyous Hindu spring festival is celebrated across the state. Festivities continue for five days and include colourful street floats (in the larger towns), local folk theatre, sword dances and the lively spraying of coloured powder.
All Saints Procession (Apr), Goa Velha, Piar. Large crowds of devotees carry statues of 26 saints in procession from St Andrew's Church. In this small village near Piar.
Feast of St Francis Xavier (3 Dec), Old Goa. The feast of Goa's patron saint is held on the anniversary of his death (1552). Attended by Catholic pilgrims from all over the world, the feast is preceded by novenas (nine days of prayer).





A Walk through Old Goa 19



Portrait of
Vasco da Gama

A magnificent complex of cathedrals, churches and monasteries, spread along a 1.5-km (1-mile) stretch, marks the site of Old Goa, the Portuguese capital until the mid-18th century. The walk through this area, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, takes in two of Goa's most important religious monuments, the Basilica de Bom Jesus and the grand Sé Cathedral, and ends on Holy Hill, where some of Goa's oldest churches are located. Most of these buildings, designed by Italian or Portuguese architects, encompass a range of European styles, from sober Renaissance to exuberant Baroque and Portuguese Mannerism (see p501).



④ Sé Cathedral

This is thought to be Asia's largest church. The gilded high altar has six splendid panels depicting the life of St Catherine of Alexandria.

③ The Chapel of St Catherine

Like Our Lady of the Rosary, was built to celebrate Albuquerque's victory in 1510, and served as Goa's only cathedral until the Sé Cathedral was built.



⑫ Royal Chapel of St Anthony

St Anthony, Portugal's national saint, was also considered the Captain of the army.

⑬ Our Lady of the Rosary

was built on top of Holy Hill in 1526 by Alfonso de Albuquerque. He had watched Yusuf Adil Shah's defeat in 1510 from this very spot and vowed to build a church here.



⑨ Church and Convent of St John of God

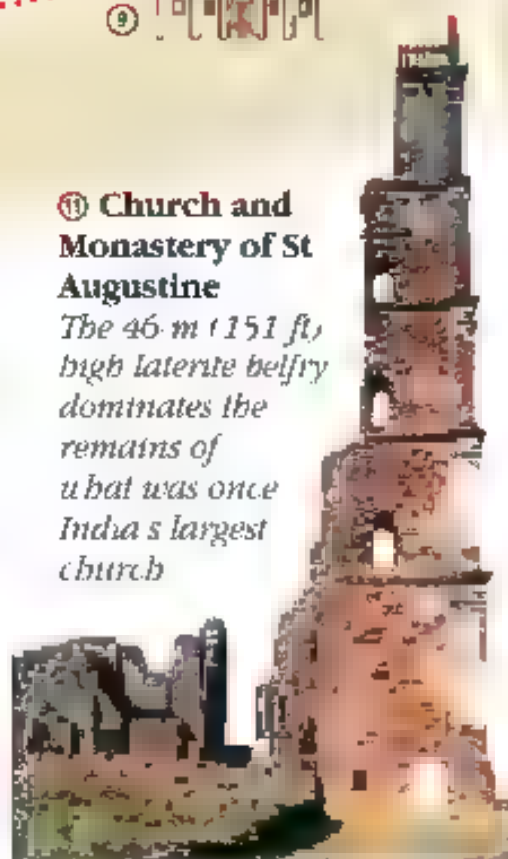
This convent was built in 1685 by the Order of the Hospitallers of St John of God, to tend to the sick. It was rebuilt in 1953.

⑩ Convent of St Monica

dating to the mid-17th century, will house Asia's first Museum of Christian Art, currently being relocated from Rachol (see p504).

⑪ Church and Monastery of St Augustine

The 46-m (151 ft) high laterite belfry dominates the remains of what was once India's largest church.



② Gateway of Adil Shah's Palace

The gate, comprising a lintel and basalt pillars is all that survives of Adil Shah's palace, also used as the viceroys' residence from 1554 to 1695



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

North Goa district (Tiswadi taluka)
9 km (6 miles) E of Panaji
Karmali, 9 km (6 miles) S of Old Goa. or taxi from Panaji
GTDC, Old Goa Tourist Hotel, behind Police Station, near MG Statue, (0832) 228 5327 Feast of St Francis Xavier (3 Dec). The Archaeological Survey of India's booklet on Old Goa is available at the Archaeological Museum.

① Viceroy's Arch

Over 1,000 ships a year brought new arrivals to Goa in the 17th century. They passed under this laterite archway built by Francisco da Gama (viceroy 1597-1600)



③ Church of St Cajetan

Built by Italian friars in 1651, this church is renowned for the exuberant woodcarvings on its high altar and pulpit

④ Basilica de Bom Jesus (see pp498-9)



⑤ Church of St Francis of Assisi

Built by the Franciscan friars in 1521, this is one of Old Goa's most important churches. Its carved and gilded main altar depicts the crucified Jesus, four Evangelists, St Francis, and Our Lady with the baby Jesus.

⑥ Archaeological Museum

A bronze statue of the poet Luis Vaz de Camoes, holding his epic *Os Lusíadas* (see p487), stands in the museum, now housed in the converted convent of St Francis of Assisi, adjoining the church.



Old Goa: Basilica de Bom Jesus

The Basilica de Bom Jesus is revered by Roman Catholics all over the world since it houses the mortal remains of Goa's patron saint, Francis Xavier. It was the first church in South Asia to be granted the status of Minor Basilica, by Pope Pius XII in 1946. Built by the Jesuits in 1594, this grand Baroque structure blends Corinthian, Doric, Ionic and composite styles in its magnificent three-tiered façade. The Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III, donated the elaborate tomb of St Francis in exchange for the pillow that lay under the saint's head. The tomb took the Florentine sculptor Giovanni Foggini ten years to build; it was finally assembled in 1698. The adjoining Professed House (1589) was used as the priests' quarters until it was damaged by a fire in 1633.



Doorway to Sacristy

An exquisitely carved wooden door leads to the sacristy



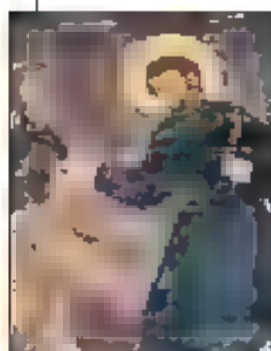
★ Main Altar

The gilded reredos has a statue of St Ignatius of Loyola and another of the Infant Jesus. Local craftsmen, used to decorating temples, made plump, typically Hindu-looking cherubs on the altar.

Altar of Our Lady of Hope

Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament

Altar of St Michael



St Francis Xavier, Art Gallery

ST FRANCIS XAVIER (1506–1552)

Francis Xavier was sent to Goa by the Portuguese king, Dom João III. He arrived in May 1542, aged 36, and worked tirelessly over the next few years, converting nearly 30,000 people. He died while on voyage off the coast of China in 1552, and was temporarily buried on an island. When his body was dug up three months later to transfer his bones, it showed no signs of decay. A year later, when his remains were enshrined in the Basilica in Goa, his body was still in pristine condition. This was declared a miracle, and in 1622 he was canonized. Expositions of his relics take place every ten years or so; the last one was in 2004–2005.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Main Altar
- ★ Tomb of St Francis Xavier
- ★ Wooden Pulpit



★ Tomb of St Francis Xavier

The marble and jasper tomb has four bronze plaques depicting scenes from the saint's life. Built in a mixture of Italian and Indian styles, the silver reliquary containing the sacred relics is surmounted by a cross with two angels

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

North Goa district (Tiswadi taluka, Rua das Naus de Ormuz, Old Goa. Tel (0832) 228 5790.

☐ daily ☑ during mass

✚ All services are in Konkani

7am & 8am, Mon-Sat,

8am & 9:15am, Sun.

Art Gallery Professed House

☐ daily

★ Wooden Pulpit

The figures of Jesus and several Evangelists are beautifully carved on the pulpit

Sacristy



Basalt Stone Tablet

The Jesuit motto, IHS or Iesus Hominum Salvator means Jesus the Saviour in Greek



Catholic nuns at the entrance to the Basilica

Façade

This is the only Goan church not covered in lime plaster. Its original coat was removed in 1956, exposing the soft red laterite beneath. Each of the three doorways and six windows is flanked by elegant pillars and basalt detailing.



Exploring Old Goa

Portugal's Goa Dourada ("Golden Goa") was once a vast city inhabited by more than 30,000 people. In the 16th century, it attracted missionaries and soldiers, merchants and horse-traders, and its elegant palaces and mansions were much praised by contemporary visitors. However, by the mid-18th century, a series of epidemics and the silting up of the Mandovi river forced the viceroy to move his residence downstream to Panaji (see pp486). Thereafter, decline set in and, by the 19th century, the city was finally abandoned and its houses demolished. Today, Old Goa is a mere shadow of its former self, but the few churches and cathedrals that remain are considered to be among Goa's most significant monuments.

Church of St Cajetan

End of Viceroy's Arch ☐ daily

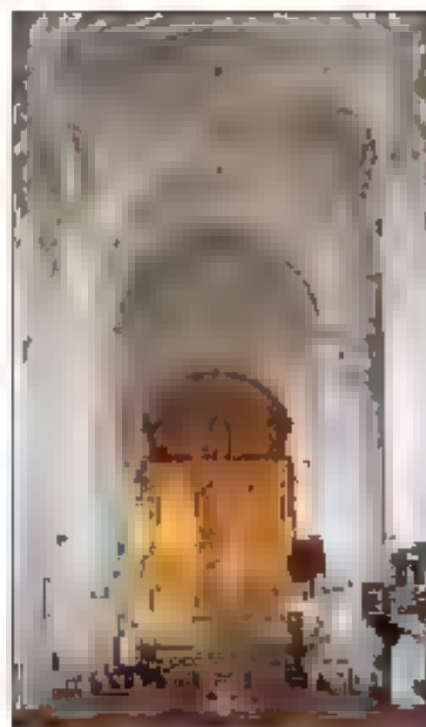
In the 17th century, Pope Urban III sent Italian priests from the Theatine Order to Golconda (see pp666–7). When refused entry they settled in Old Goa. Here, in 1651 they erected a church dedicated to their founder, St Cajetan, and designed along the lines of St Peter's in Rome. The distinctive dome and interior, laid out in the shape of a Greek cross, embody the majesty of Italian Baroque. The adjacent monastery is today a college of theology.



Detail of altar,
Church of St Cajetan

magnificent cathedral, that would be the largest in Asia. The result is the Renaissance-style Sé Cathedral, designed in the 16th century by Julio Simao and Ambrosio Arguero, and built over 80 years. Its 30-m (98-ft) high Tuscan-style façade was flanked by two square bell towers, only one of which survives. It hangs the Golden Bell, known for its melodic tones, which rang out during the dreaded *auto da fé* trials, held in the cathedral's front square.

The interior, with intricate Corinthian detailing, has a 76-m (249-ft) long central nave. As many as 15 altars grace the interior, but the *pièce de résistance* is the gilded high altar, dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria, with panel paintings depicting scenes from her life. Two of the eight chapels, the Blessed Sacrament and the Cross of



Rows of pillars on either side of the central nave, Sé Cathedral

Miracles, have delicate filigree work on their screens. The font, used by St Francis Xavier to baptize converts, is near the entrance. The sacred relics of his body, kept in the Basilica de Bom Jesus (see pp498–9), are brought to the cathedral during the expositions held every ten years.

Archaeological Museum

Convent of St Francis of Assisi

Tel (0832) 228 5333 ☐ Sat–Thu 10

Once Goa's largest monastery, the Convent of St Francis of Assisi (built in 1517) now houses the Archaeological Museum, established in 1964. A huge bronze statue of Alfonso de Albuquerque moved from Panaji, dominates the entrance hall. Among the objects of interest are a finely carved image of Vishnu and a Surya statue dating to the Kadamba period (11th–12th centuries), and stone inscriptions in Marathi and Persian.



From right to left, Sé Cathedral, Church of St Francis of Assisi and Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Old Goa

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp709–11 and pp737–8

ruins of earlier ruling dynasties. Other exhibits include Hindu *saff* stones, a model of *Sao Gabriel* (the ship in which Vasco da Gama sailed to India in 1498) and a bronze statue of St Catherine in the courtyard. The Portrait Gallery on the first floor has 60 paintings of Goa's viceroys and governors.

Church of St Francis of Assisi

W of Sé Cathedral. ☐ daily
Built by the Franciscan friars in 1521 and rebuilt in 1661, this church has a beautifully carved doorway (taken from the original building). This is a rare example of the Portuguese Manueline style, which uses many nautical motifs and was developed during



Facade with two octagonal towers, Church of St Francis of Assisi

the reign of King Dom Manuel (r 1469–1521). A pair of navigator's globes and a Greek



Detail of memorial, St Augustine's ruins

cross (the emblem of all Portuguese ships) embellish the door. The superb Baroque interior has floral frescoes on the walls and ceiling, and the floor is paved with the sculpted tombstones of Portuguese

nobility. The gilded altar has figures of St Francis and Christ. Other noteworthy features are the pulpit, which is carved in floral designs and the painted panels in the chancel, which depict various scenes from the saint's life.

Church and Monastery of St Augustine

Holy Hill.
Once the largest church in India, with a grand five-storeyed facade, St Augustine's now lies in ruins. Erected by the Augustinian order in 1512, the Gothic-style church was abandoned in 1835, and its roof caved in seven years later. Excavations begun in 1989 revealed eight chapels, four altars, wall sculptures and more than 100 splendid granite tombstones. According to contemporary descriptions, the church also had grand staircases and galleries, and a library that rivaled the one at Oxford (England), in the 17th century. Today, all that remains of St Augustine's is its soaring bell tower (see p496).

Church of Our Lady of the Rosary

Holy Hill. ☐ daily

With its castle-like turrets and simple altar painted with baskets of flowers, this is one of Goa's earliest Manueline-style churches. The tomb of Dona Catarina, wife of Garcia de Sá (viceroy from 1548–9) and the first Portuguese woman to migrate to Goa, also lies here.

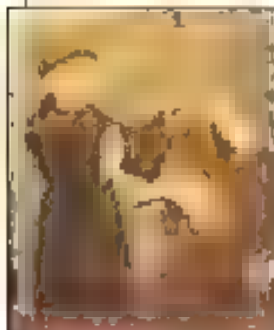
Further Afield

A few buildings of interest lie in Old Goa's southeastern corner. Marking the end of the Rua Direita, Old Goa's main street, is a desolate basalt pillar on a raised platform, the remains of the terrible **Pillory**. Criminals and heretics were strung up here as punishment, in the centre of the city square. Close by, on the road to Ponda, lies the **College of St Paul**. Founded by the Jesuits in 1541, it had 3,000 students, making it the largest Jesuit school in Asia. It also housed Asia's first printing press. St Francis Xavier stayed and preached here; the chapel further up the road was also used by him, and was later dedicated to his memory.

The Church of Our Lady of the Mount, built in 1510, sits on top of a hill and is reached by a lane that leads off the Cumbarjua Road. Built by Alfonso de Albuquerque after his victory over Yusuf Adil Shah, the church has recently been restored. The views over Old Goa's towers and turrets are magnificent.

THE GOA INQUISITION

At the request of Francis Xavier (see p498), a tribunal of Jesuits arrived in 1560 and took over Adil Shah's secondary palace (of which few traces now remain), to the south of Sé Cathedral. Their mission was to curb the libertine ways of the Portuguese settlers and convert "infidels." During the Inquisition in 1567, all Hindu ceremonies were banned,



Mural of a prosecuting priest

temples were destroyed and Hindus forcibly converted. Those who refused were locked away in the dungeons of the "Palace of the Inquisition" (as Adil Shah's palace was known) to await the *auto da fé* (acts of faith) trial. The condemned were burnt alive in front of a congregation of dignitaries. Over the next 200 years, 16,000 trials were held, and thousands killed, and it was not until 1812 that the Inquisition was finally dissolved.



Altar in the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, on Holy Hill



17th-century painting of St Cecilia, patroness of church choirs, Pilar

Pilar 11

North Goa district (Tiswad taluka)
12 km (7 miles) SE of Panaji

Set on a hilltop, **Pilar Seminary** was originally built by the Capuchins (a Franciscan order) in 1613, on the site of an old Hindu temple. Abandoned in 1835 when all religious orders were disbanded, it was reopened by the Carmelites in 1858. In 1890, the Society of Pilar set up a mission college here, and classes are still held in the old seminary building.

The adjoining **Church of Our Lady of Pilar** has an elaborately carved stone doorway with a figure of St Francis of Assisi above it. Inside is a statue of Our Lady of Pilar, brought here from Spain. The tomb of Agnelo D'Souza (seminary director, 1918–27) lies adjacent to the church. The **New Seminary**, built in 1946, stands close by. Its museum displays fragments from the original temple, Christian art, Portuguese coins and a stone lion, the symbol of the Kadamba dynasty.

Museum

Tel (0832) 221 8521 ☐ daily

Environs

Goa Velha, 2 km (1.3 miles) southwest of Pilar, marks the site of Govapuri, the port-capital of the Kadamba rulers between the 11th and 13th centuries, of which few traces now remain.

Ponda 12

South Goa district (Ponda taluka) 28 km (17 miles) SE of Panaji 17 700
Urs of Shah Abdullah (Feb)

The town of Ponda is a busy commercial centre, and its main sight is the **Safa Shahouri Mosque**, 2 km (1.3 miles) to the west. Built by Ibrahim Adil Shah (a successor of Yusuf Adil Shah) in 1560, it is a rectangular structure with window arches, topped by a slanting tiled roof. A ritual tank to the south has the same designs as those on the *mihirabs* (arched niches).

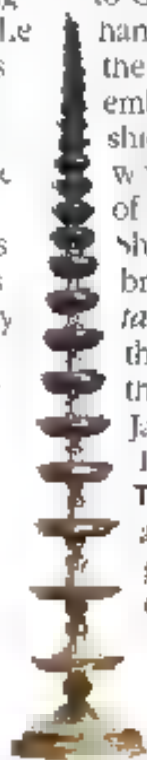
Ponda also lends its name to the *taluka* (sub-district) of the same name, which is renowned for its numerous Hindu temples, tucked away in thick forests. As the Portuguese expanded their territory in central Goa, they destroyed over 550 temples. Hindu priests fled with their religious artifacts to regions that lay outside Portuguese control, especially the area around Ponda town, where they built new temples in the 17th and 18th centuries.

More than half of Goa's population is Hindu, and Goan temples, unlike those elsewhere in India, are a fascinating blend of European Baroque, Muslim and Hindu architectural styles. Their basic plan remains Hindu, but often Muslim domes replace the usual

shikharas (spires) over the main sanctum, and the prayer halls are decorated with ornate European chandeliers.

The **Shantadurga Temple**, 3 km (2 miles) southwest of Ponda at Quelá, is Goa's most popular shrine. Built by Shahu, the grandson of the Maratha chief Shivaji (see p471), the russet and cream-coloured temple has an unusual pagoda-style roof, dominated by a five-storeyed octagonal lamp tower, unique to Goa. Grand chandeliers hang from the gilded roof in the huge central hall, and embossed silver screens shield the main sanctuary which holds the silver deity of Shantadurga (a form of Shiva's consort Parvati), brought from Mormugao taluka. Also of interest are the huge *rathas* (chariots) that are used during the Jatra in January (see p493). The **Shri Ramnath Temple**, a short walk away, is noted for the grand silver screen embossed with animal and floral motifs, in front of its sanctum. Its linga, originally from Loutolim, is worshipped by devotees of both Shiva and Vishnu.

The **Shri Nagueshi Temple**, 4 km (2.5 miles) west of Ponda at Bandora, dates to 1780, though a temple may have stood here earlier. Built for the worship of Nagesh (Shiva as Lord of the Serpents), it is one of the oldest temples in this region. Its entrance hall



Brass lamp tower, Shri Mahalsa Temple



The large 18th-century water tank at the Shri Mangesh Temple

has carved wooden friezes depicting scenes from the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* (see pp26-7).

The 18th-century **Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Temple** is situated in Velंगा village 5 km (3 miles) northwest of Ponda. Its majestic image of Narasimha, Visnu's man-lion incarnation (see p679), was brought here from Mormugao in the 1560s. Surrounded by forest, it is one of Goa's most attractive temples, with a sacred tank and an elaborate gateway. A tower standing close by houses the temple's musicians during the annual Jatra festival, held here in May.

Dedicated to Vishnu, the **Shri Mahalsa Temple** is 7 km (4 miles) northwest of Ponda, in Mardol village. The main deity (either a female form of Vishnu or his consort Lakshmi) was taken from Verna. The temple's distinguishing feature is an exceptionally tall brass pillar 21 tiers in all, rising from a figure of Karma (Vishnu's incarnation as a turtle), with Garuda (his vehicle) perched on top. The pillar symbolizes Mount Kailasa which, according to Hindu mythology, was placed on Karma's back and was used to churn the primordial ocean. The original shrine is a wooden structure with a sloping roof, and the entrance porches have carvings of musicians and warriors. Its main hall has



A procession during the Shigmo Jatra, at the Shri Mahalsa Temple



The Kadamba-period Tambdi Surla Temple, set on the banks of a stream

intricately carved pillars while the central part of the ceiling is raised, with painted images of gods set in niches.

A short distance to the northwest, at Priol, lies Goa's wealthiest temple, the 18th-century **Shri Mangesh Temple**, dedicated to Shiva. The courtyard has a sacred *tulsi* (basil, plant growing in a bright green urn, a characteristic Goan feature). There is a large sacred tank and a seven-storeyed lamp tower. Dance-dramas are performed here during the Jatra festivities in April and May. A vividly painted elephant on wheels stands at the entrance to the white and yellow temple. Inside, 19th-century Belgian chandeliers hang from the ceiling, while the main sanctum has a linga transferred from Mormugao. The childhood home of Lata Mangeshkar (b 1929), India's most famous singer of film songs, was near the temple.

About 4 km (2.5 miles), northeast of Ponda town, near the village of Khandepar is a cluster of **Hindu Rock-cut Caves** from the 10th-13th centuries, with carved lotus decorations on the ceiling, simple door frames and niches for oil lamps.

A few spice gardens that grow aromatic spices such as cardamom, nutmeg and cinnamon, make interesting day trips from Ponda. The Pascoal Plantation, 8 km (5 miles) east and the Savori Spice Garden at Savori Verem, 12 km (7 miles) north, are easy to reach.

Tambdi Surla ⑬

South Goa district (Sanguem taluka), 73 km (45 miles) E of Panaji. *Taxis from Panaji or Ponda are the best option.*

Hidden away in the forests of Tambdi Surla stands the oldest existing Hindu temple in Goa, dating from the



Detail, Tambdi Surla Temple

Kadamba period (between the 11th and 13th centuries). Built in black basalt and dedicated to Shri Mahadeva (Shiva), the temple probably survived because of its remote location.

The symmetrical structure is made of stone slabs fitted neatly into each other without using mortar. Set on a low plinth, the entrance hall has ten pillars, and the *shikhara* (spire) above the sanctum has a miniature relief and fine carvings of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and his consort, Parvati.

Environs

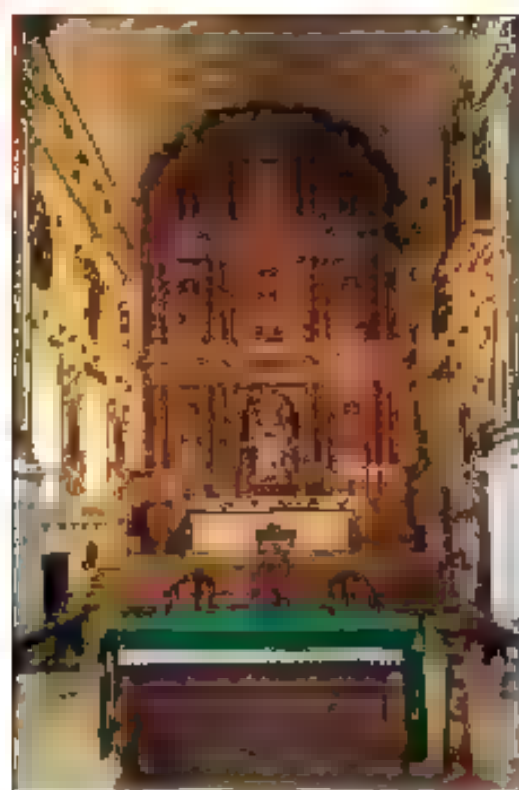
The **Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary**, 20 km (12 miles) southeast of Tambdi Surla, covers an area of 240 sq km (93 sq miles) and is home to leopards, deer and the Indian bison. The 600-m (1,969-ft) high **Dudhsagar Waterfalls** on the Goa-Karnataka border are its main attraction. The small **Bondla Sanctuary**, 40 km (19 miles) east of Tambdi Surla, is known for its variety of birds.

✦ **Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary**

☐ daily 10

✦ **Bondla Sanctuary**

☐ Sep-Jun, Fri-Wed. 10



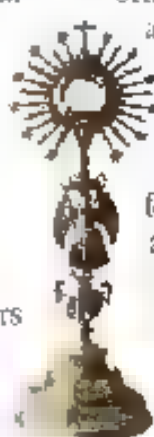
Altar, Church of St Ignatius Loyola, Rachol

Rachol 19

South Goa district (Salcete taluka).
52 km (32 miles) SE of Panaji

The small hamlet of Rachol occupies the site of an old fortress built by the Bijapur sultans (see p542), which was ceded to the Portuguese in 1520. A laterite archway and a dry moat are the only remnants of the bastion – once fortified with 100 cannons – that used to guard the southern borders of the Portuguese territories. The pretty **Church of Nossa Senhora das Neves** (Our Lady of the Snows), in the village, was built in 1576.

Today, **Rachol Seminary**, built in 1606, is probably the most important of Goa's seminaries. First established in Margao in 1574, and known as the College of All Saints, the earlier seminary included a hospital, a school for the poor and a printing press. It was relocated here after the Margao institution was destroyed in a Muslim raid in 1579. For generations, this was Goa's most prestigious educational institution both for secular and religious studies, offering a seven-year course in theology and philosophy, to prepare young seminarians for the priesthood.



Silver reliquary, museum collection

Spectacularly located on the summit of a hill, the building has a grand fort-like façade, flanked by imposing watch-towers. The seminary's vast entrance hall is covered with impressive murals and opens on to a central courtyard, surrounded by cloistered rooms made of solid teak, each one with an adjoining wood-panelled study. The grand staircase is adorned with Hindu sculptures, excavated from the ancient Hindu temple on the site of which the seminary was constructed. This leads to the first floor and the library, which has

a rare collection of Latin and Portuguese books, and portraits of Goa's archbishops.

Attached to the seminary is the **Church of St Ignatius Loyola**, dedicated to the eponymous saint. It has an

ornately carved and gilded altar with a painting of St Constantine, the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. According to legend, a few bone fragments and a vial of his blood were brought to Rachol in 1782, and are supposedly enshrined near the entrance. The choir stall has delicate murals of the founding saints of various religious orders. On the first floor balcony is a beautiful 16th-century pipe-organ from Lisbon.

Until mid-2001 Rachol Seminary also housed the renowned Museum of Christian Art, established in 1991 by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) and the Guibentian Foundation of Portugal. The entire collection is currently being shifted to the Convent of St Monica in Old Goa (see p496), and will be set up in the Chapel of the Weeping Cross, adjacent to the convent. Its impressive collection of 17th- and 18th-century religious objects includes silver and ivory ornaments, ornate clerical robes, processional crosses and holy water sprinklers. Particularly charming is a portable altar for travelling missionaries, complete with candle stands and a mass kit.

Margao 15

South Goa district (Salcete taluka).
33 km (21 miles) S of Panaji

₹78,500. Margao Residency. (0832) 271 5528. Feast of the Holy Spirit (Dec)

Margao (Madgaon), Goa's second most important city after Panaji, is the administrative and commercial capital of the South Goa district. This bustling town also serves as the area's main trading centre for local fish and farm produce.

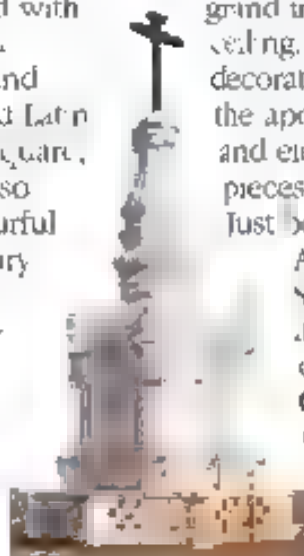
The town square, **Praça Jorge Barreto**, has the large colonial Municipal Building which houses the library on its southern side, and a popular café called Longinhos.



A view of the hilltop Seminary and Church at Rachol

nearby. Just behind the Municipal Building, to the south, are Margao's lively bazaars, selling the day's catch of fish and fresh fruit and vegetables. The **Covered Market**, close by, sells just about everything, including piles of soap flakes, pulses, dried fish, pickles, spicy pork sausages, tamarind, flower garlands, jaggery and crockery. A row of shops to the north sells locally brewed wines, and the lane just outside the market has a number of cloth merchants.

Abbé de Faria Street winding north from the town square is lined with some well-preserved colonial mansions, and leads to Margao's old Latin Quarter. Its central square, **Largo de Igreja**, is also surrounded by colourful 18th- and 19th-century town houses, with tiled roofs, wrought-iron balconies and balustrades. In the centre of the square is a monumental, 16th-century cross, overlooked by the towering Baroque **Church of the Holy Spirit**. Built in



Monumental cross in Largo de Igreja

1565 on the site of a ravaged Hindu temple, the church and the adjoining Jesuit College of All Saints were ransacked numerous times by Muslim raiders. While the seminary was moved to Rachol, the church was rebuilt in 1675. Its whitewashed façade is flanked by two towers topped by domes and embellished with lanterns, though its side

walls have been left unusually bare of lime-plaster. The grand interior has a stucco ceiling, a gilded pulpit decorated with carvings of the apostles, a Rococo altar, and elegant Baroque altarpieces in the transepts. Just behind the church, **Agostinho Lorenzo Street** leads east to the imposing mansion called **Sat Burnzam Gor** or "Seven Gables" (see p506), named after the original seven gables or pyramids, crests on its roof. It is the only surviving example


of a house with pyramidal roofs in Goa. Built in 1790 by Ignacio da Silva from his earnings as the viceroy's secretary, the huge, impressive salons are filled with richly carved rosewood furniture and priceless porcelain, and its private chapel was the first that was permitted in Goa. From the intersection lying east of the church, a road winds up to



The red and white Municipal Building, Praça Jorge Barreto, Margao

Monte Hill. Although one cannot enter the tiny chapel at the top, the views across Margao's rooftops of the entire southern coast are spectacular.

Sat Burnzam Gor

 Only by prior appointment, contact Mrs de Silva.

Environs

The pretty villages around Margao have a number of colonial country mansions, dating to the prosperous period from the 18th to the 19th centuries, when local landlords began to profit from Portugal's control over the maritime trade routes from Africa to Malacca (in Malaysia). Many of these homes were also owned by Goans, who held high posts in the Portuguese government and were granted land in exchange for their services.

Loutolim 10 km (6 miles) to the northeast, was once an important Portuguese administrative centre, and has a cluster of stately homes, all situated fairly close to the main church square. The Goa Tourism office, and the Houses of Goa museum, (0832) 241 0711, located at Salvador do Mundo, can organize visits to these buildings. **Chandor** 13 km (8 miles) east of Margao, has the palatial Braganza house, Goa's largest private dwelling (see pp508-9). **Chinchinim** 10 km (6 miles) south of Margao, and **Benaulim** 6 km (4 miles), southwest of Margao, also have fine mansions, with typical Goan *bacaos* (porches) and terracotta-tiled sloping roofs.



Fresh prawns, sardines, mackerel and salmon, Margao bazaar

Goa's Colonial Mansions

Goa's countryside is dotted with grand colonial mansions, built by the wealthy land-owning Goan gentry, who prospered in the 18th and 19th centuries. The homes of these local aristocrats were built in the traditional style of the region, with central courtyards, deep porches and window shutters made of oyster-



Chinese vase

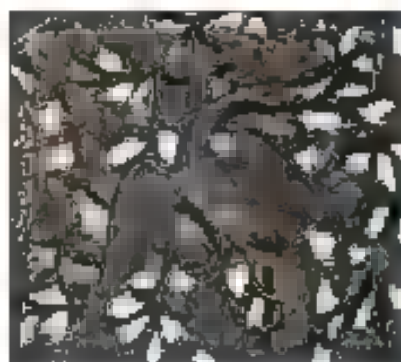
shell. The furniture and interior decor, however, were largely European. Today, the Belgian chandeliers, Venetian cut-glass and gilded mirrors, Baroque-style rosewood furniture and Chinese porcelain displayed inside, provide a fascinating picture of the tastes and lifestyles of a vanished era.



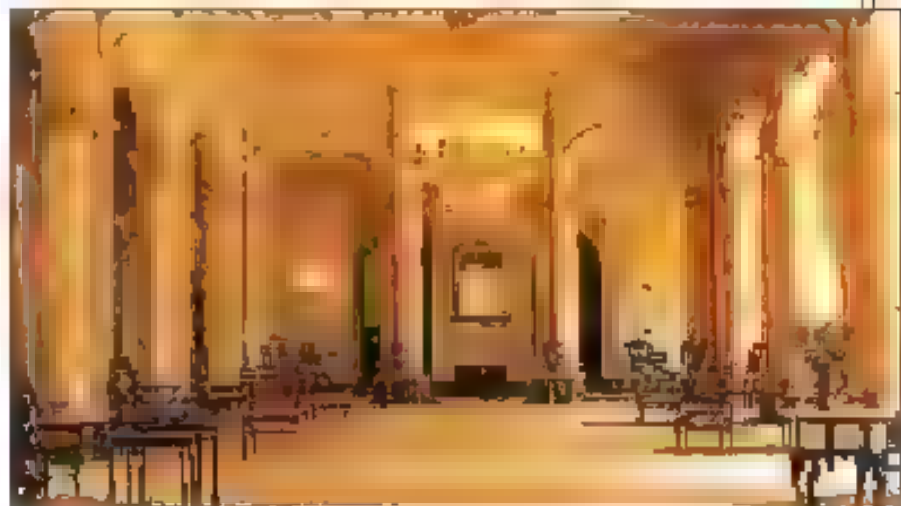
Oyster-shell window shutters line the facade of *Sat Burnzam Gor* ("Seven Gables"), in *Margao*. A unique feature of 16th- and 17th-century Goan architecture, oyster shells were used in place of glass panes and effectively kept out the heat and glare.



A typical pyramidal *balcao* or *porch* graces the entrance of the *Figueredo House* in *Loutolim*. Chairs were often placed under the *balcao* as it was customary to socialize at the front door.



This antique rosewood carving from Goa's grandest mansion, *Braganza House* in *Chandor* (see pp508-9), is a typical example of Indo-Portuguese Baroque.



European-style salons, such as the regal ballroom in the *Dr Alvaro Loyola Furtado Mansion* in *Chinchinim*, built in 1833, have crystal chandeliers and elegant furniture.



Carved antique furniture at the *Casa dos Mirandos*.

WHERE TO SEE GOAN HOUSES

Loutolim has four houses of interest – *Salvador da Costa House*, *Roque Caetan Miranda House*, *Figueredo House* and *Casa dos Mirandos*, which is the finest. **Margao** has the *Sat Burnzam Gor*, **Chinchinim** has the *Loyola Furtado Mansion*, and **Chandor** has the *Braganza House*. For more details see page 505.



Colva 17

South Goa district (Salcete taluka)
6 km (4 miles) W of Margao

H GTDC Tourist Cottage, (0832) 278 8047 Fama de Menino Jesus (Oct)

Colva's proximity to Margao makes it an ideal summer retreat for Margao's residents. It is one of South Goa's oldest and most developed beach resorts, and its 25-km (16-mile) long sandy beach, from the Mormugao peninsula in the north to Monor in the south, is the longest uninterrupted stretch in the state.

Today Colva draws vast numbers of visitors, who spend the day enjoying the lively atmosphere of its many beach shacks, set high on stilts and backed by shady palms. These serve delicious grilled lobster and other seafood specialties. Numerous top-end and mid-range hotels stand on the main beach road, while the southern extremes have more pristine stretches.

Fishermen haul in their catch on the beach front, which also plays host to full-moon rave parties.

Standing a short distance from the sea, Colva's **Church of Our Lady of Mercy** built in 1630, has an attractive Baroque interior and houses the famous statue of Menino (Infant) Jesus, holding an orb and a flag, revered for its miraculous healing powers.

Environs

Majorda, 7 km (4 miles) north of Colva, has a wide beach

donated with luxury hotels. **Bogmalo Beach**, 20 km (12 miles) northwest of Colva, is a popular venue for wind-surfing.

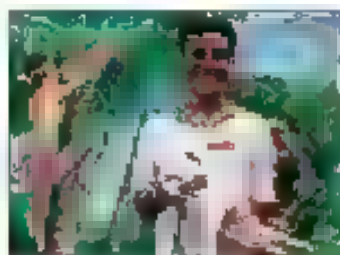
Tourism has spilled over from Colva to the quiet fishing village of **Benaulim**, 2 km (1.3 miles) south, whose roads are lined with small guesthouses, restaurants and bars. **Varca Beach**, 5 km (3 miles) further south, has many plush hotels, as well as a parish church with an imposing façade.

Cavelossim 18

South Goa district (Salcete taluka)
15 km (9 miles) S of Margao

A favourite with Indian celebrities, Cavelossim has an enchanting 2-km (1.3-mile) stretch of sand. It also has a golf course, luxury resorts and

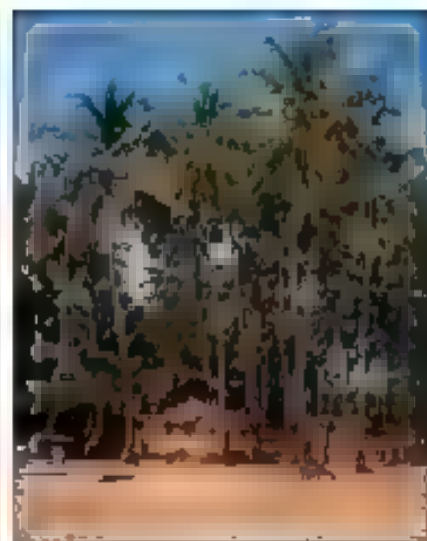
excellent seafood restaurants, such as the Seaways Bar. The ornate **Church of the Holy Cross** is situated in a pretty square.



A cheerful waiter, Mobor

Environs

Mobor, 5 km (3 miles) south of Colva, is an idyllic spot, with its backdrop of hills and the pretty fishing village of **Betul** nestling near the Sal river. The Leela Beach Resort is located here. **Cabo da Rama** ("Cape Rama"), the promontory just south of Betul, is named after Rama, hero of the *Ramayana*, who supposedly hid here during his 14-year exile (see p 27). It has the ruins of a Hindu fortress that fell to the Portuguese in 1763.



A thatch-roofed beach shack, Palolem Beach

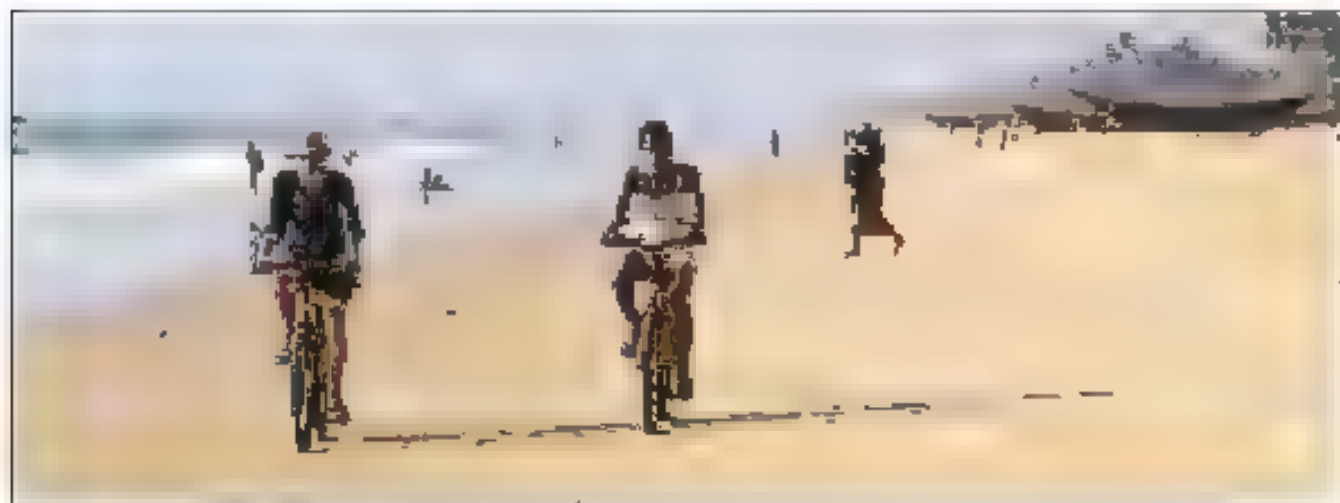
Palolem 19

South Goa district (Salcete taluka)
37 km (23 miles) S of Margao

Famous for its spectacular sunsets, this bay is enclosed by a rocky outcrop at one end, and Canacona Island, a good camping site, at the other. Palolem's remote location, away from the crowded beaches of central Goa, makes it an ideal for a quiet holiday. A special attraction are the boat rides offered by fishermen who take visitors out to sea for dolphin-watching trips.

Environs

Southern Goa is for the most part isolated and unspoiled by tourism. **Agonda**, 7 km (4 miles) north of Palolem, is even quieter than its neighbour. **Galgibaga**, 8 km (5 miles) south of Palolem, has a beautiful stretch of virgin sand, shaded by eucalyptus trees rather than palms. The remote **Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary**, 18 km (11 miles) west of Palolem, is worth visiting for its tranquil beauty.



Visitors cycling on the sands at Colva, Goa's longest beach

Braganza House 16



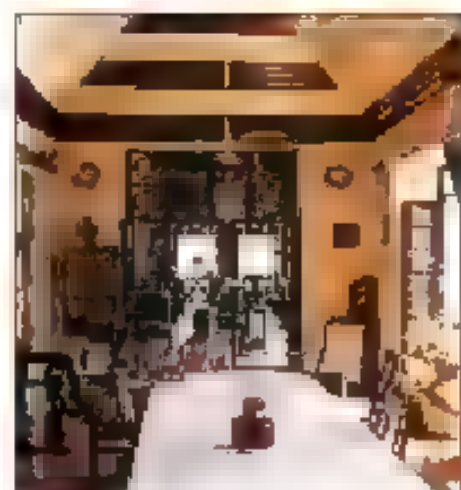
Chinese blue
porcelain dish

The awesome scale of Braganza House and the magnificence of its interior, make it Goa's grandest colonial mansion. This 17th-century building is still occupied by two branches of the Braganza family. The descendants of Antonio Elzario Sant Anna Pereira occupy the east wing, while Francisco Xavier de Menezes

Braganza's descendants live in the west wing. Both men received royal titles and a coat of arms from the king of Portugal in the late 19th century. The top floors of their private apartments have the splendid ballroom, library and chapel, and fine collections of 18th-century furniture and Chinese porcelain.

★ The Chapel

The Baroque-style chapel has a diamond-encrusted finger nail of St Francis Xavier on its altar.



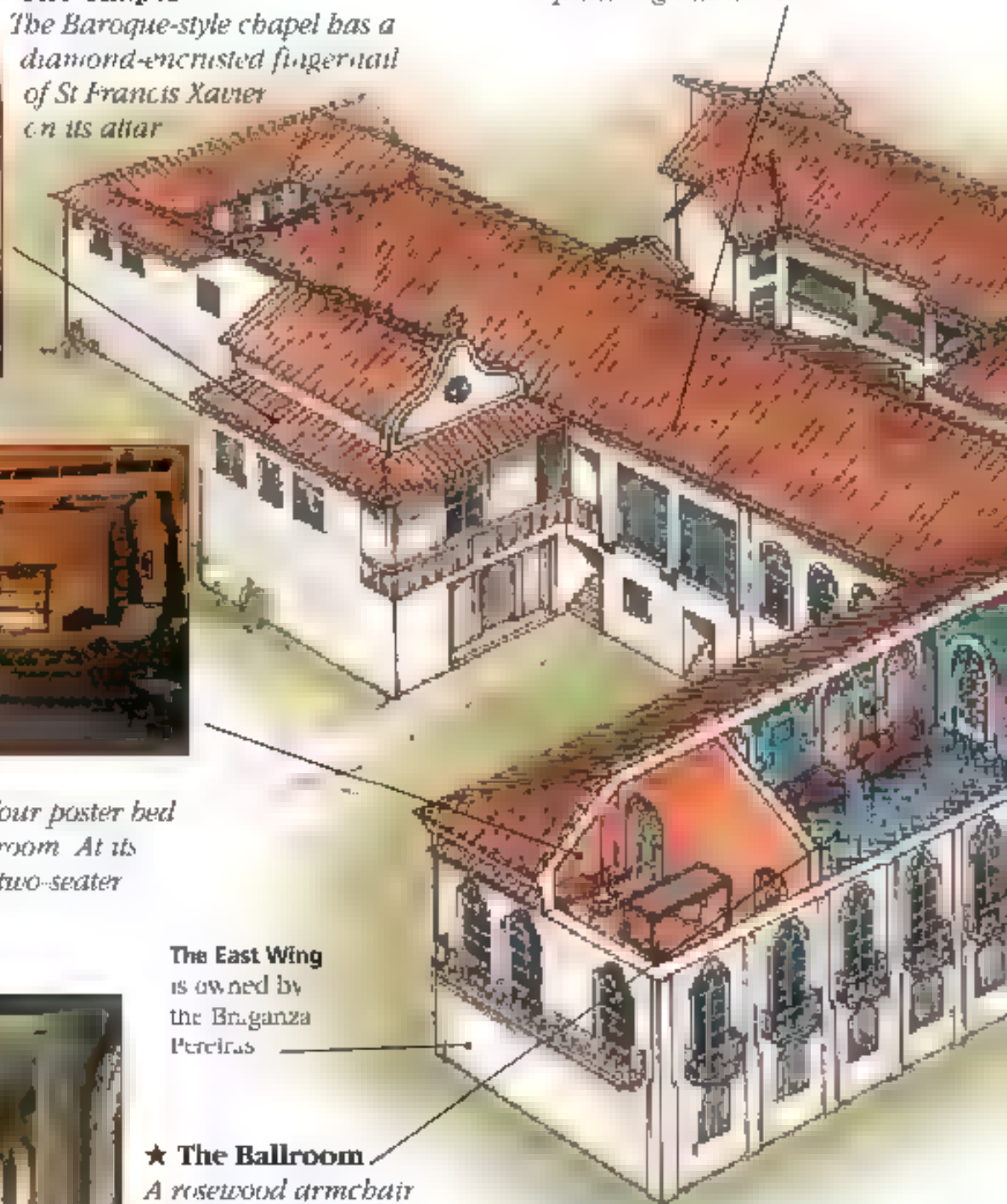
Dining Hall

A long table fills the first floor dining hall of this sprawling mansion.



Guest Bedroom

A large rosewood four poster bed dominates the bedroom. At its foot is a rosewood two-seater.



The East Wing
is owned by
the Braganza
Pereiras

★ The Ballroom

A rosewood armchair with the Braganza coat of arms, and a gilded mirror are in the mansion's grandest room. The walls as well as the floors are of marble and chandeliers hang from its floral patterned zinc ceiling.



STAR FEATURES

- ★ The Chapel
- ★ The Ballroom
- ★ The Hallway



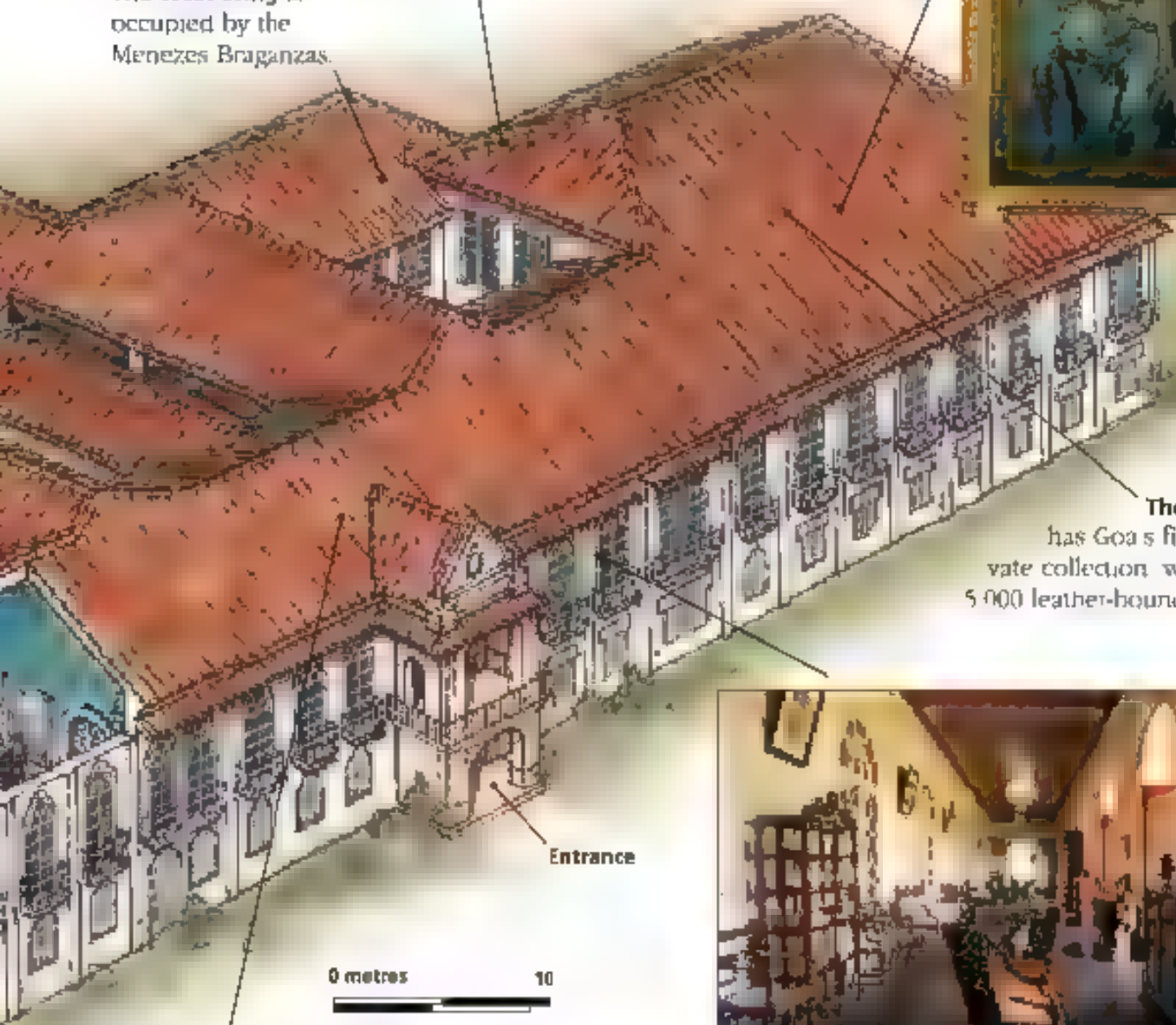
Menezes Braganza Salon

A collection of exquisite Chinese porcelain is displayed in one of the salons, where a large vase takes pride of place

Portrait of Francisco Xavier de Menezes Braganza

A portrait of the grandfather of renowned journalist Luis de Menezes Braganza (see p487), hangs in the ballroom of the west wing

The West Wing is occupied by the Menezes Braganzas.



The Library has Goa's finest private collection, with over 5 000 leather-bound books



★ The Hallway

A long and elegantly furnished hallway lies just behind the façade of the house. It is lined with 28 bay windows and overlooks a well-maintained garden



Stairway

The monumental double staircase forms the core of the house, connecting the lower entrance level to the furnished top floors



KARNATAKA

Extending from the Arabian Sea and the fertile forested ridges of the Western Ghats, with their thriving plantations of coffee, spices and fruit, to the drier, boulder strewn region of the Deccan Plateau, Karnataka's scenic diversity is striking. Equally varied are its historical monuments. These range from the 6th-8th century Hindu temples at Badami, Pattadakal and Aihole, the earliest to be found in South India, to Tipu Sultan's 18th century, European style island fort at

Srirangapattana, and the extravagantly turreted, early 20th-century palace in Mysore. Other sights include the superb temples at Halebid and Belur, the colossal Gommateshvara monolith at Sravana Belgola and the magnificent ruins of Hampi, the site of the great citadel of Vijayanagar. In northern Karnataka are the medieval citadels of the Deccan sultans at Bijapur, Gulbarga and Bidar, their walls enclosing mosques, audience halls and royal tombs.



SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns, Cities & Districts

Bangalore 1
Barkur 18
Belgaum 20
Bhatkal 23
Bidar 20
Bijapur 24
Gadag 19
Gokarna 13
Gulbarga 25

Kodagu 6
Mangalore 7
Mysore 5

Historic Sites

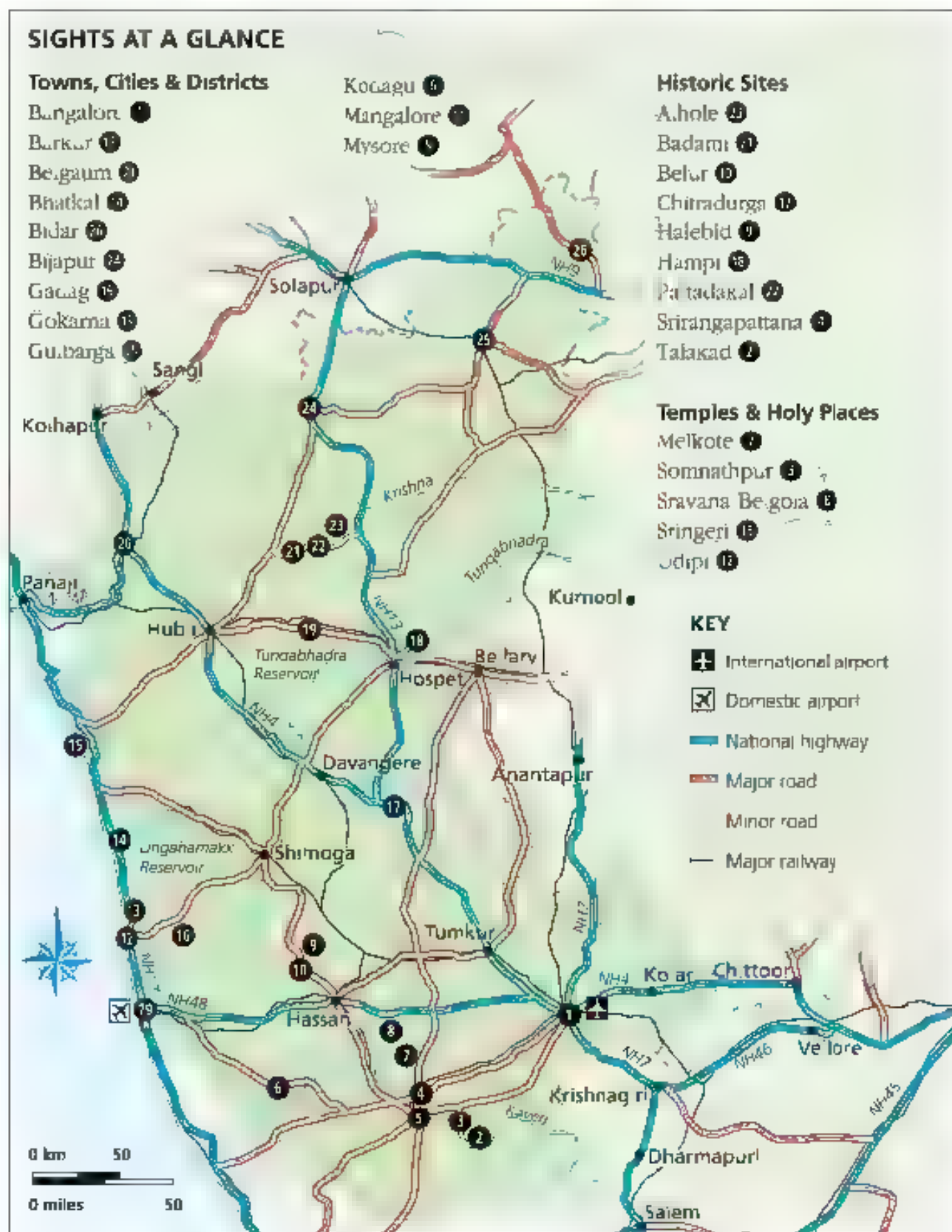
Aihole 23
Badami 11
Belur 10
Chitradurga 17
Halebid 9
Hampi 16
Pattadakal 22
Srirangapattana 3
Talakad 1

Temples & Holy Places

Melkote 7
Somnathpur 3
Sravana Belgola 8
Sringeri 15
Udupi 12

KEY

- International airport
- Domestic airport
- National highway
- Major road
- Minor road
- Major railway



Bangalore ①



Stone carving,
Museum

Often described as Asia's Silicon Valley because of its thriving information technology industry, Bangalore is India's fifth-largest and fastest growing city. Until its high-tech boom began in the late 1980s, it was known as the Garden City with greenery flourishing in its pleasant, temperate climate. Today, with a growing population of young professionals, it has acquired a vibrant, cosmopolitan air.

Bangalore was founded in the 16th century by a local chieftain, Kempe Gowda, but derives its name from the Kannada word *benda kahuru*, or "boiled beans" which an old woman gave a 10th-century Hoysala king when he turned up hungry at her doorstep.

☐ Vidhana Soudha

Dr Ambedkar Rd. ☐ to the public
Built of granite and porphyry, this imposing building houses the Secretariat and the State Legislature of Karnataka. Constructed in 1956 after the transfer of power from the ruling Wodeyar dynasty to the central government, it was designed by Bengal Hindu-mantarah, the then chief minister, who intended it to "reflect the power and dignity of the people". It is capped by a 20-m (66-ft) dome, which is surmounted by the four-headed Ashoka lion symbol of the Indian state. With Rajasthani *pietra* pillars and other decorative elements, the Vidhana Soudha exemplifies the Neo-Dravidian style of post-Independence Bangalore. The woodwork inside is noteworthy,

especially the sandalwood door to the Cabinet Room and the Speaker's Chair made of rosewood from Mysore. The building looks spectacular on Sunday evenings when it is beautifully illuminated.

☐ Attara Kacheri

E. Vidhana Vidhi

☐ Mon-Fri

This graceful, two-storeyed building with Corinthian columns was completed in 1864 and housed the Public Offices from 1868 until 1956. These were later moved to the Vidhana Soudha, and this building became the High Court. On the ceiling of its Central Hall is a portrait of Sir

Mark Cubbon, commissioner of Mysore from 1834 to 1861. Behind the building is an equestrian statue of him by Baron Marochetti.

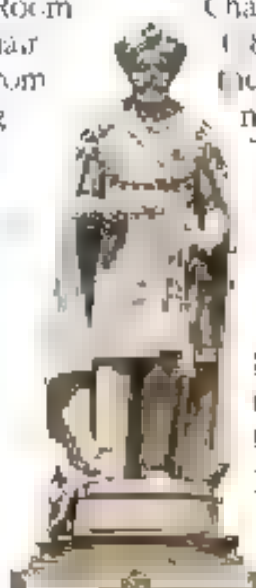
♣ Cubbon Park

Cantonment ☐ daily ☐

Laid out in 1809 by Richard Stankey, the chief engineer of Mysore, and named in honour of the commissioner, Cubbon Park extends over 135 ha (334 acres). Its partly formal landscaping imaginatively integrates natural rock outcroppings with groves of trees and giant bamboos.

The park is liberally dotted with statues, such as that of the 9th-century ruler

Chamarajendra Wodeyar (1808-94) overlooking the pond near an octagonal, cast-iron bandstand. There are also marble statues of Queen Victoria and Edward VII. In the middle of the park, a red-painted Neo-Classical building known as the **Sheshadri Iyer Memorial** houses a public library.



Chamarajendra
Wodeyar

☐ Government Museum

Kasturba Gandhi Rd

Tel (080) 2360 5033

☐ Tue-Sun ☐

Venkatappa Art Gallery Tel (080)

2286 4483 ☐ Tue-Sun ☐

Established in 1866, this is one of the oldest museums in the country. Housed in a

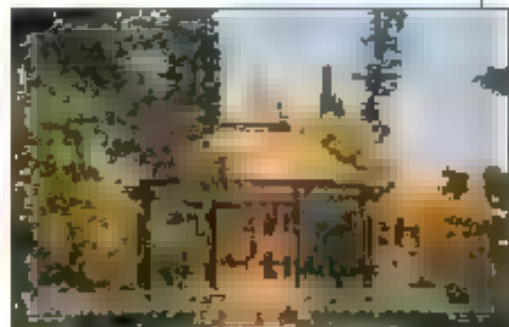


The magnificent Vidhana Soudha, housing the Karnataka Secretariat

GARDEN CITY

The Cantonment in Bangalore was established in 1809 to house British troops quartered here during the 19th century. With its orderly streets, houses with characteristic "monkey top" eaves, and its lawns, trees, flowers and shrub-

bery, Bangalore was eventually christened the "Garden City of India". Two large parks, Cubbon Park and Lalbagh, along with numerous smaller ones such as the Kensington Gardens, act as the lungs of this verdant city. These gardens provide a welcome retreat from Bangalore's crowded streets and give a refreshing sense of space. The city is particularly charming in January and August when dahlias, marigolds and roses bloom in abundance.



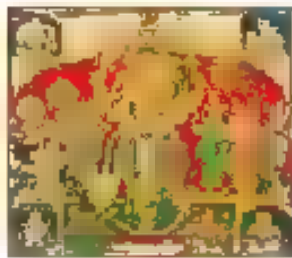
A corner of Cubbon Park

red stucco Neo-Classical building with Corinthian columns. It has 18 sections, with a fine collection of jewellery, miniature paintings, sculpture, artifacts from Mohenjodaro, and 5 000-year-old neolithic relics.

The Venkatappa Art Gallery, named

after an early 20th-century artist patronized by the Wodeyar rulers of Mysore forms one wing of this museum. It has watercolours and paintings made in the Mysore style.

These works still retain a greenish coating, imparted by a finishing rub with jade. The gallery also has a collection of leather puppets made of deer- and goat-skin, and fine sculptures from the Saravali, Hoysala and Vijayanagar periods.



Mysore painting from Venkatappa Art Gallery

St Mark's Cathedral

Mahatma Gandhi Rd. ☐ Tue-Sun

This simple, Neo-Classical cathedral was completed in 1812 and consecrated by the Bishop of Calcutta in 1816. An elegant, cream-coloured structure, it has an imposing portico in front and an apsidal recess at the rear. A shallow dome marks the internal crossing.

Bangalore Palace

N of Vidhana Soudha

Tel (080) 2336 0818

for permission to visit

By 11 in 1880 at

the exorbitant cost of one million rupees, the Bangalore Palace was modelled on Windsor Castle, complete with fortified towers and turreted parapets. It stands amid undulating lawns, partly converted into a formal garden with axial paths.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bangalore district 1,033 km (642 miles) S of Mumbai

4,292 500 9 km (6 miles)

E of city centre, then bus or taxi.

Govt of India Tourist Office, 48 Church St, (080) 2558 5417 Karnataka Tourism, Badami House NRS Square (080) 2227 5869 Karaga (Apr), Kadalekaye Parshe (Nov/Dec)

Spread over 13,700 sq m (147 466 sq ft), the palace fell into disrepair after 1949 when it was at the centre of an ownership dispute between the government and the ruling Wodeyars. It has since been restored to the Wodeyars and is now rented out as a popular venue for functions such as weddings and music concerts, and film shoots. No Kannada movie is considered complete if a scene is not shot here.



Exploring Old Bangalore

In spite of rapid development, vestiges of the city's historic past are still found in the streets of Old Bangalore, south of the city centre. In contrast to the relentless modernization of the rest of Bangalore, this area contains monuments from the period of the Gowdas to that of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, and bears witness to the city's history from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

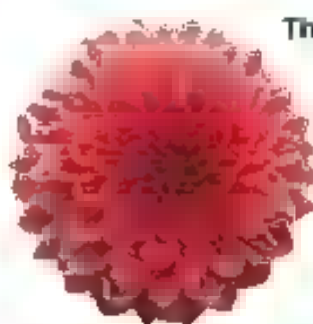
Tipu Sultan's Palace

Albert Victor Rd.
Tel (080) 2670 6836

☐ Mon–Sat ☒ Within the original citadel, a mud-brick fort built by Kempe Gowda in 1537, lies Tipu Sultan's Palace,

dating from about 1790. Made mostly out of wood with finely embellished balconies, pillars and arches, this two-storeyed structure, a replica of the Daria Daulat Bagh in Srirangapatana (see p516), served as a summer retreat of Tipu Sultan. He endearingly called it *Rashk-e-Iannat*, or the "Envy of Heaven". Although now dilapidated, it is still a hauntingly atmospheric place retaining the original elegant teak pillars.

The palace housed the public administrative offices from 1831 until they were shifted to the Attara Kacheri in 1868 (see p512). It now has a museum with artifacts from the Haider Ali–Tipu regime.



Dahlia bloom, Lalbagh

The Venkataramana-swamy Temple

nearby, dates from the early 18th century and was built by the Wodeyar kings.

Lalbagh

Lalbagh Fort Rd.
Tel (080) 2657 0181

☐ daily ☒ Flower Show (Jan & Aug)

Regarded as one of the most richly diverse botanical gardens in South Asia, Lalbagh, in the southern part of the city, was laid out by Haider Ali in 1740. Spread over 97 ha (240 acres) of parkland, many of its tropical and subtropical plants were brought here by Haider Ali's son, Tipu Sultan. Later, John Cameron, the Gardens Superintendent in the 1870s, imported several more rare species from Kew Gardens in London. Cameron was also responsible for initiating work on Lalbagh's famous Glass House, modeled on London's Crystal Palace and conceived as a

venue for horticultural shows. Surrounded by *champak* trees and pencil cedars, the Glass House has played host to several visiting dignitaries. An Annual Flower Show is still held here.

The entrance to the park is marked by an equestrian statue of Chamaraja Wodeyar of Mysore. Another popular attraction is the surreal Floral Clock, surrounded by Snow White and the seven dwarfs, this was a gift from Hindustan Machine Tools, leading Indian manufacturers of watches.

Gavi Gangadhareshvara Temple

W of Lalbagh ☐ daily ☒ Makar Sankranti (Jan)

One of Bangalore's oldest temples, the Gavi Gangadhareshvara Temple was built inside a natural cave in Gavipuram by Kempe Gowda in the 16th century. Legend has it that Kempe Gowda built this temple in gratitude after being released from his five-year imprisonment by Rama Raya.

Highlights include granite pillars, two of which support huge discs representing the sun and the moon, while the other two are topped by a Nandi and a trident. Devotees gather here during the Makar Sankranti festival to witness a unique phenomenon – the evening sun's rays passing between Nandi's horns and falling on the linga inside the cave.



The spacious, 19th-century Glass House at Lalbagh, with its intricate cast-iron frame

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp711–12 and pp738–9

The Glitter of Gold

The ancient seers of India referred to gold by many names – synonyms for life, longevity, and beauty. Indians considered this metal auspicious and believed that wearing gold ornaments would ensure a long life. Craftsmen traditionally drew inspiration for their designs and motifs from nature, and also from the splendid



A gold tali pendant

temples with their ornately carved façades. The Kolar and Hatti mines in Karnataka were the repositories of the largest deposits of gold in ancient India. Due to the high price of gold, craftsmen mastered the technique of beating a minuscule quantity of gold into thin sheets and then transforming them into exquisite jewellery.



Bangles



Earrings

Hair ornament

DECORATIVE ORNAMENTS

Gold ornaments were designed to be worn on practically every part of the body, from the crown of the head to the tips of the toes, to decorate and protect the wearer. Plants, animals and astral bodies inspired many of the shapes.



A Lady, late 19th-century painting by Raja Ravi Varma showing a woman in her finery



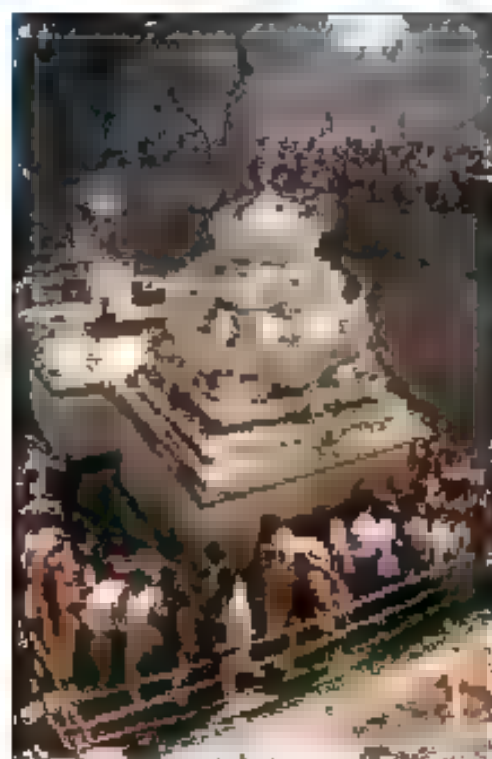
A large cobra head, set with rubies, emeralds and diamonds and edged with emerald beads. It is tied to a patti to prevent it from unravelling. The snake form, as a symbol of fertility, occurs in many ornaments.



Temple deities are often adorned with ritual ornaments. These pieces display some of the forms and techniques used by ancient Indian jewellers, and show the evolution of their craft.



Pavan Sara, a necklace made of coins is a piece of jewellery found all over the country. As an instrument of savings, the coins were redeemed for cash when the need arose.



Devotees congregating at the Vaidyeshvara Temple, Talakad

Talakad ①

Mysore district 50 km (30 miles) SE of Mysore Panchalinga Darshana (at intervals of 4–12 years)

The historic city of Talakad, situated on the north bank of the Kaveri river, now lies partly buried under shifting sand dunes. From the 5th to the 10th centuries it was the capital of the Ganga dynasty (see p522), but only two modest temples survive from that period. The largest edifice at this site is the 12th-century **Vaidyeshvara Temple** dedicated to Shiva. Nearby is the more modest Kirt Narayana Temple, where the 3-m (10-ft) high image of Vishnu is still worshipped. A festival, the Panchalinga Darshana, is celebrated here at intervals ranging from four to 12 years.

Somnathpur ③

Mysore district 36 km (22 miles) E of Mysore

One of the finest representations of Hoysala architecture (see p524), the **Keshava Temple** is the highlight of this obscure little village. Built in 1268 by Somnatha, a general of King Narasimha III, its design is attributed to the celebrated sculptor and architect

Janakacharya. The temple is accessed from the east through a doorway with an open portico, where a slab records Somnatha's generous donations. Unlike the other Hoysala temples at Halebidu and Belur (see p523) this is well preserved and has complete towers. The temple has three star-shaped shrines that lead off a pillared hall; both the shrines and the hall stand on a high platform. The basements of the inner sanctums and hall are profusely carved with animal and floral patterns, while images of deities under foliage canopies occupy the walls above. The interior of the hall is remarkable

for its splendid columns and the elaborate ceilings which display lobed motifs, pendants,

bosses and looped bands. The three shrines house fully-moulded life-size images of Krishna playing the flute (south) and Janardana

a form of Vishnu (north). The Krishna image in the western shrine is a recent replacement of the original.

Also in Somnathpur is the ruined granite **Panchalinga Temple**, built in 1268 as a memorial in honour of Somnatha's family.

Keshava Temple
 daily

Srirangapattana ④

Mandya district 16 km (10 miles) N of Mysore **Tel** (08232) 238 377 from Mysore from Mysore. Autos and cycles available.

Known to the British as Seringapatam, this island fortress in the Kaveri river enjoys historical significance as the site of the battles between the British and Tipu Sultan, the 'Tiger of Mysore'. The British finally stormed the citadel in 1799, killing Tipu and consolidating their power in South India. Today, none of the structures within the fort survive, barring the bridges across the two arms of the Kaveri river from which the bathing ghats and the ramparts can be seen.

To the east and the south, a broad moat surrounds the polygonal bastions and

barreled parapets constructed by the French engineers employed by Tipu. The Mysore Gate and Elephant Gate, to the



Insignia engraved on a horse-cart, Srirangapattana

south, are flanked by guardrooms. Sultan Battery, the dungeons where Tipu used to keep British prisoners, is to the north; nearby is the Water Gate, where Tipu was killed.

The **Sri Ranganatha Temple**, after which the island is named, is a large complex that was substantially restored in the 19th century. The inner sanctum enshrines an image



Representations of Hindu deities at the Keshava Temple



Mural depicting a battle at the Daria Daulat Bagh, Srirangapatana

of the reclining Vishnu, and is approached through pillared halls and an open courtyard with a gilded lamp column.

The fort's eastern end has the **Jami Masjid**, erected by Tipu in 1787. It has an elevated prayer chamber.

The **Daria Daulat Bagh**, Tipu Sultan's summer palace, built in 1787, stands in the middle of a beautiful garden near the river, a short distance south of the fort. Each of its sides has three arched openings in the centre and the whole palace is surrounded by a pillared verandah. The east and west walls of the verandah are both covered with murals, restored in 1855. On the west wall are scenes of battle, one of which illustrates Haider Ali's victory over the British at Pollur (1780), while the east wall depicts courtly scenes. The carved woodwork and the

elegant painted floral designs on the wall, reveal Mughal influence. The palace is now a museum, with paintings, maps and Tipu memorabilia on display.

Further south past the Church of the Abbe Dubois (where the learned French Jesuit priest and author lived between 1799 and 1823) and the British Cemetery, is the **Gumbaz** – the tombs of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. The walls of the chambers are decorated with the tiger-stripes motif (*hubri*) favoured by

Tipu. The ebony and ivory doors were a gift from the viceroy, Lord Dalhousie, in 1855. The *sangam* (confluence) of the two arms of the Kaveri river is further south.



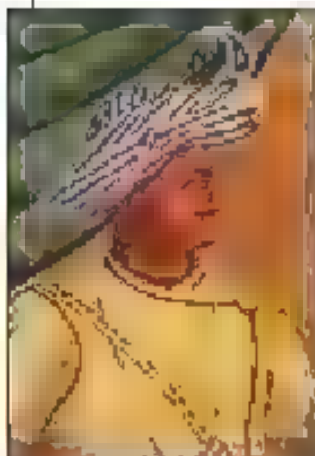
Snake shrine, Srirangapatana

■ Daria Daulat Bagh Museum

Tel (08326) 252 045 ☐ Sat-Thu



TIPU SULTAN: "TIGER OF MYSORE"



Portrait of Tipu Sultan (1750–99)

Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore, stands head and shoulders above the many Indian rulers who were his contemporaries. He was a shrewd diplomat, expert soldier, excellent scholar and accomplished poet, and his military and administrative skills were complemented by his dream of a modern industrial state. The latter found expression in his cultivation of European contacts and employment of French engineers. The Sultan's main adversaries were the British who had conquered part of his father Haider Ali's territory and wealth in the first two Mysore Wars (1767–9 and 1780–84). Tipu waged two further wars against them, culminating in the fall of Srirangapatana in May 1799, where he died fighting.

FESTIVALS IN KARNATAKA

Banashankari Temple Fair (Jan/Feb) Badami. This 20-day festival combines religious rites with the excitement of a funfair. An annual cattle fair specialising in white bulls, is held at the same time. **Hoysala Mahotsava (Mar)**. Be ur and Halebidu. A festival of dance and music unfolds against the spectacular backdrop of these historic temples.

Royal Dasara (Sep/Oct) Mysore. This grand, 10-day festival known as Dussehra in North India celebrates the victory of the goddess Chamundeshwari (Durga) over the buffalo demon, Mahishasura. It owes its origin to the Mahanavami festival (see p531). A royal elephant carrying an image of the goddess leads a splendid display of military bands, sports and parades, while religious ceremonies worship the elephant, the horse and weapons such as the State sword. Firework displays, concerts and wrestling matches liven up the evenings. A descendant of the former ruling Wodeyars plays a pivotal part and the famous golden throne, generally not on display is used for the rituals.

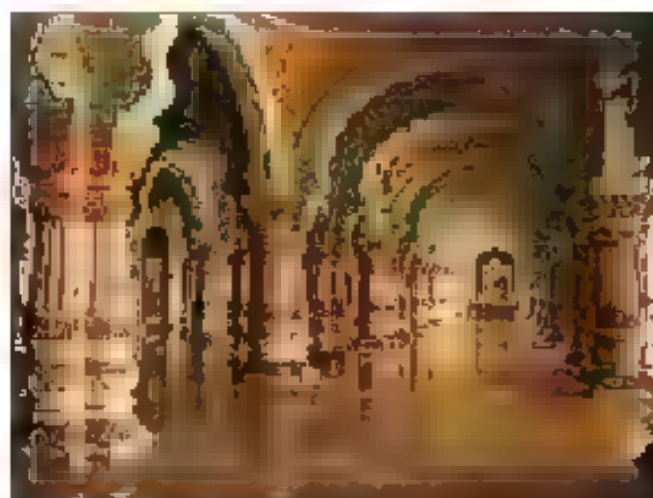
Hampi Festival (Nov), Hampi. Well-known dancers and musicians from around the country participate in this lively event.



Caparisoned elephant at the Dasara celebrations, Mysore

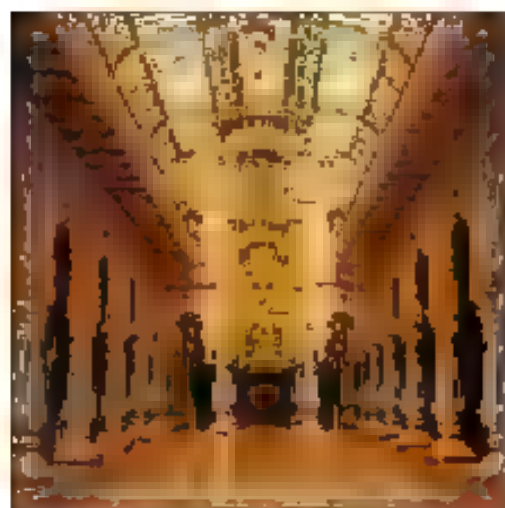
Mysore: Amba Vilas Palace

The magnificent Amba Vilas Palace—a treasure house of exquisite carvings and works of art from all over the world—was built by the Wodeyar rulers. The main block of this Indo-Saracenic building, with domes, turrets, arches and colonnades, was designed by Henry Irving in 1897. It replaced an earlier structure that was destroyed by a fire. During weekends and festivals thousands of light bulbs enliven the palace's stern grey exterior.



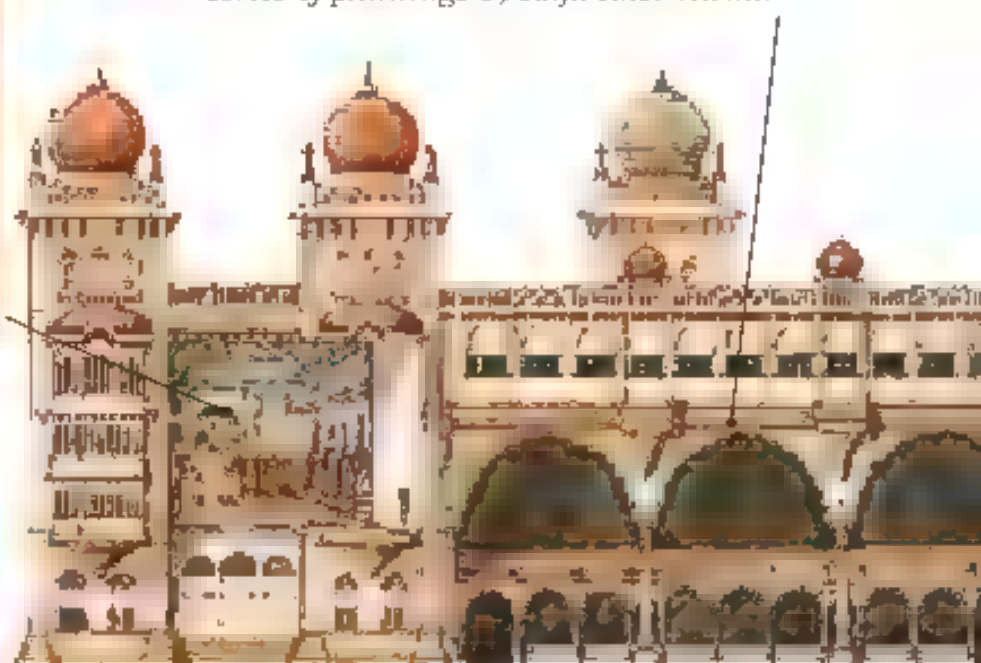
Public Durbar Hall

The richly decorated gold-and-turquoise Durbar Hall, on the second floor, exudes royal splendour. On its rear wall are a series of paintings by Raja Ravi Varma.



Amba Vilas Hall

The Private Durbar Hall is smaller than, but as sumptuous as, the Public Hall. It is roofed with stained glass imported from Glasgow. The central part of its ceiling is supported by cast-iron columns and arches.



Mysore

Mysore district, 140 km (87 miles) SW of Bangalore. ☎ 742 500. 📺 📶 📱 KSTDC Transport Wing, Hotel Maurya Yatri Niwas, 2 Jhansi Laxmi Bai Rd. (0821) 242 3652. 🗓️ Vairamudi Festival (Mar/Apr), Feast of St Philomena (Aug), Royal Dasara (Sept/Oct).

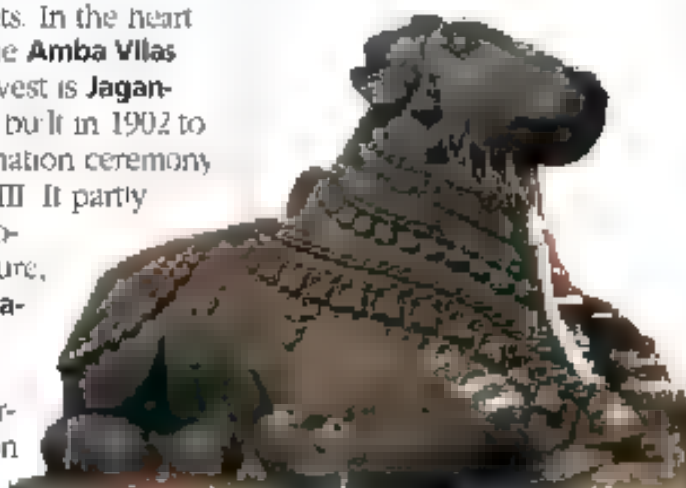
Situated among fertile fields, and skirted by wooded hills, Mysore was the capital of the Wodeyar rulers, who were governors of southern Karnataka under the Vijayanagar kings. The Wodeyar dynasty ruled almost uninterrupted from 1399 until Independence, except for the 38-year rule of the Muslim warlord Hater Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan, in the 18th century (see p17). Modern Mysore is the creation of Tipu Sultan who, in 1793, revealed

the old city and built the present town. Today Mysore is an important cultural centre, with the largest university in Karnataka. It is also renowned for its ivory work, silk-weaving, sandalwood incense and carvings.

Several elegant public buildings, erected under the Wodeyars, enhance the wide, tree-lined streets. In the heart of the city is the **Amba Vilas Palace**. To its west is **Jaganmohan Palace**, built in 1902 to mark the coronation ceremony of Krishnaraja III. It partly obscures a Neo-Classical structure, now the **Chamarajendra Art Gallery**, which houses an interesting collection of disparate objects

including antique furniture, musical instruments, ceramics and ivory. On its top floor is a splendid collection of musical instruments, as well as magnificent paintings by the renowned 19th-century artist from Kerala, Raja Ravi Varma.

Near the northwestern corner of Amba Vilas Palace is **Krishnaraja Circle**, where a



The crouching Nandi on Chamundi Hill



View of the Amba Vilas Palace, Mysore

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

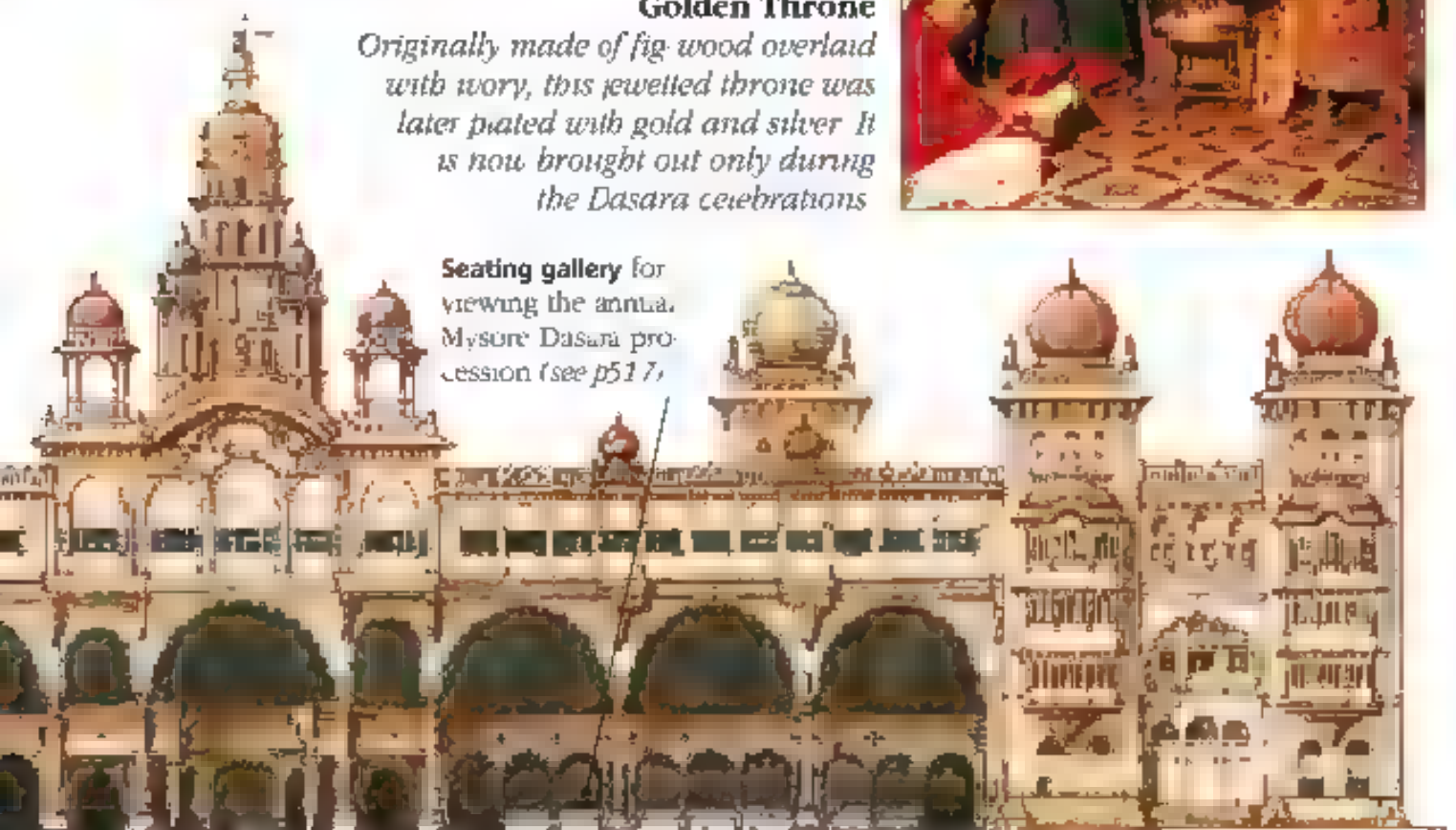
Ramvilas Rd. Tel (0821, 242
2620 ☐ daily, 10am-5pm ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Royal Dasara
(Sep/Oct,



Golden Throne

Originally made of fig wood overlaid with ivory, this jewelled throne was later plated with gold and silver. It is now brought out only during the Dasara celebrations.

Seating gallery for viewing the annual Mysore Dasara procession (see p517).



statue of Krishnaraja Wodeyar stands beneath a pavilion. The **Sayyaji Rao Road** that leads out from this circle is the principal shopping centre of the town. A short distance away is the Government House, the seat of the British Residents from 1805. Nearby the **Cathedral of St Philomena**, with a stained-glass interior is a new Neo-Gothic structure which was completed in 1959.

In the western part of the city is the Neo-Classical **Manasa Gangotri**, the campus of Mysore University. The **Oriental Research Institute** here houses a collection of Sanskrit manuscripts, while the **Folklore Museum** has one of the most important ethnographic collections of South Indian toys, puppets and household objects, as well as two wooden chariots

On the way to **Chamundi Hill** 3 km (2 miles) southeast of Mysore, is **Lalitha Mahal Palace**, built in 1930. Formerly a private royal guest house, it is now a hotel (see p712). About halfway up the hill is the Nandi monolith, dating to 1659. Carved out of a single boulder, it is 7.5 m (25 ft) long and 5 m (16 ft) high. The richly decorated bull is depicted crouching. The **Chamundeshwari Temple**, at the summit of the hill, was built in the 17th century by the Wodeyars and was later refurbished. It houses a beautifully decorated idol of Chamundeshwari, the family deity of the Wodeyar kings.

Environs

The picturesque **Brindavan Gardens** are 16 km (10 miles) to the north of the city. This popular picnic spot was laid

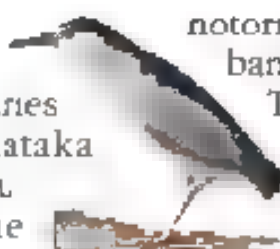
out below the Krishnarajasagar Dam by Krishnaraja Wodeyar. The numerous fountains are illuminated every evening with beautiful multi-coloured lights.



Cathedral of St Philomena

Wildlife Sanctuaries of Karnataka

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, encompassing six contiguous wildlife sanctuaries spans the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Created to protect the extraordinary biodiversity of the last surviving tracts of tropical evergreen and deciduous forests of the Western Ghats, it includes the area over which the



Heron

notorious sandalwood smuggler and bandit, Veerappan, once held sway. This reserve along with the adjacent Mudumalai Sanctuary (see p604), forms one of the most important migratory corridors for animals such as the Asian elephant and the Indian bison. These parks are within convenient reach of Bangalore (see pp512-3) and Mysore (see pp518-9).

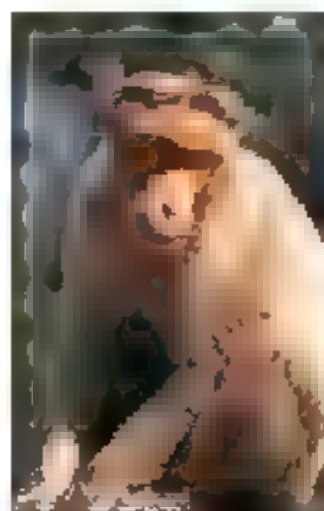
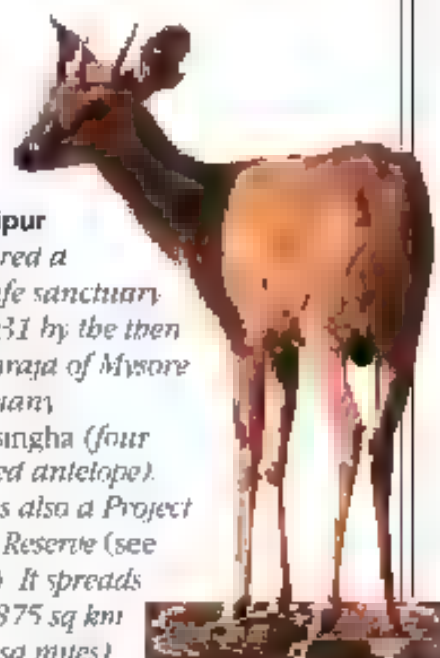


The Ranganthittoo Bird Sanctuary covers 540 sq km (209 sq miles) of riverine islands in the middle of the Kaveri river and attracts a large number of water birds during the nesting season, especially from June to November.

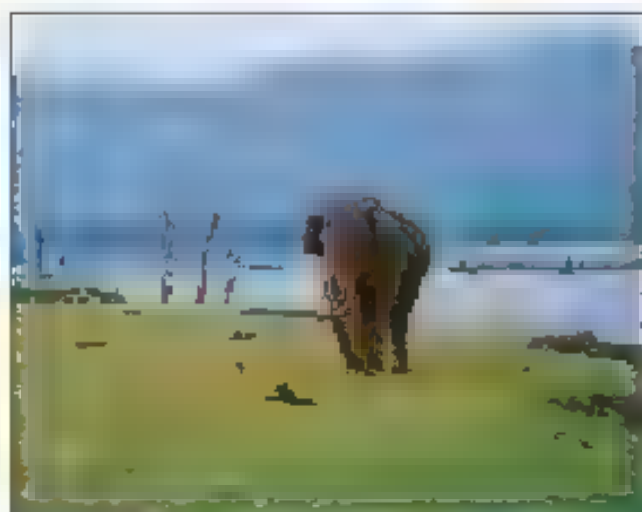


The BRT Wildlife Sanctuary east of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is a corridor between the Western and Eastern Ghats. Covering an area of 540 sq km (209 sq miles), it supports a variety of birdlife including storks.

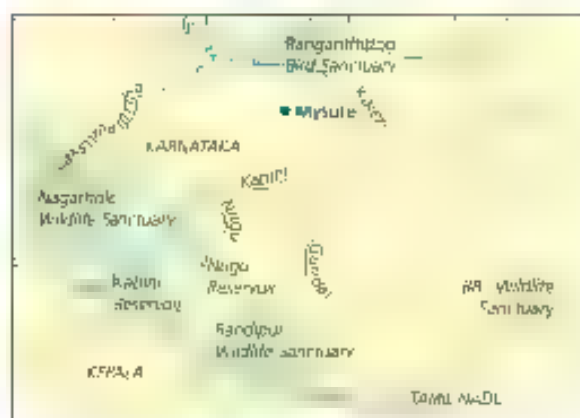
Bandipur declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1931 by the then Maharaja of Mysore has many chausingha (four horned antelope) and is also a Project Tiger Reserve (see p289). It spreads over 875 sq km (338 sq miles).



The Nagarhole Wildlife Sanctuary's profusion of rivers and swamps, grasslands keep it green all year. Established in 1983, the park has 645 sq km (249 sq miles) of deciduous vegetation. Its wildlife includes the bonnet macaque.

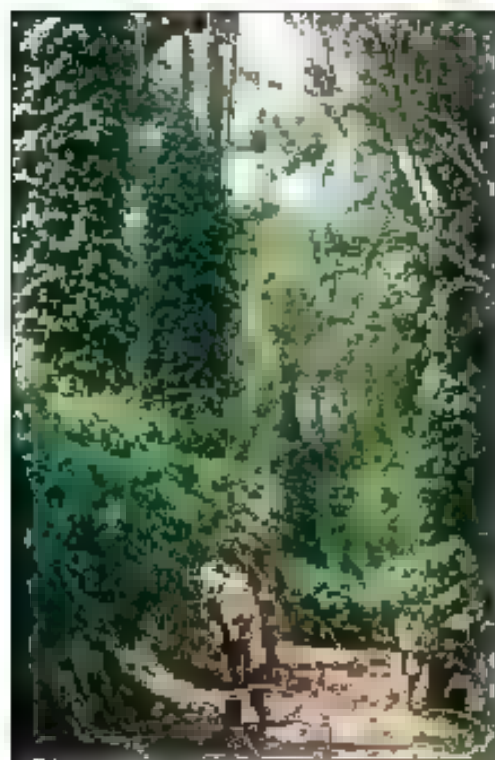


The Kabinu Reservoir separating Bandipur from Nagarhole offers fine views. The Kattini River Lodge nearby is an excellent place for sighting wildlife and a good place to stay (see p712).






LOCATOR MAP

□ Wildlife Sanctuaries



Coffee plantation in Madikeri

Kodagu 6

Kodagu district, 120 km (75 miles) S of Mysore   Department of Tourism, Madikeri, (08272 228 580)  Kailash (Sep), Huthir (Nov)

Picturesquely set amid the forested mountains of the Western Ghats, the district of Kodagu (or Coorg) was an independent state until it was incorporated into the newly formed state of Karnataka in 1956. **Madikeri**, the district headquarters, situated 1,500 m (4,921 ft) above sea level, and surrounded by rolling coffee and orange plantations, is a charming hill town, and a convenient base from which to explore Kodagu.

Madikeri (or Mercara) was once the capital of the Hindu Lingayat kings, who ruled for over 200 years from 1600 except for a brief period when Tipu Sultan seized power. The **Fort**, at the centre of the town, was built by the third Lingayat king in 1812. Within its stone ramparts, it contains the simple unpretentious palace of the Lingayat rulers, along with a temple, an old church, a museum and the local prison.

The famous **Omkareshvara Shiva Temple**, situated in a valley east of the Fort, was built by Linga Raja II in 1820 and dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva. The temple complex consists of brick buildings in the Indo-Saracenic style set in

courtyards surrounded by pillared verandahs. Other notable monuments in Madikeri are the **Royal Tombs** of Raja Dodda Wira, his wife and his son, Linga Raja II. Curiously, these display a distinct Islamic influence, with onion-shaped domes, minarets and trellis work. Kodagu remains pleasantly cool all year round, and the hills are at their most lush after the heavy monsoon showers when they make for delightful hikes. The walk up to **Abbey Falls**, 8 km (5 miles) from Madikeri, is popular and takes trekkers through forests and coffee plantations. Kodagu is

renowned for its sprawling coffee plantations first introduced in the mid-19th century by the British. The Kodava people bought back their land after Independence, but several estates still retain their British names. Kodagu produces some of the world's finest varieties of mild coffee; in fact, it is Karnataka's richest District because it accounts for the majority of coffee exports from the state. Coffee bushes are grown in the benevolent shade of large trees such as oak and rosewood, and in mixed plantations with crops of oranges, pepper vines and cardamom.

Nisargadhama, 27 km (17 miles) from Madikeri, is a beautiful forest retreat on a riverine island on the Kaveri. The bamboo cottages built here by the forest department are ideal for viewing wildlife.

Talakaveri, 45 km (28 miles) southwest of Madikeri, at an altitude of 1,276 m (4,186 ft), is the source of the Kaveri, one of India's seven sacred rivers (see p600); there is a small shrine built around the spring. At **Bhagamandala**, 36 km (22 miles) southwest of Madikeri, the Kaveri meets its two tributaries, Kanike and Sujoythi. Several shrines dot the area near the confluence – also the site of the striking Bhandeshvara temple, built in the Kerala style (see p21).



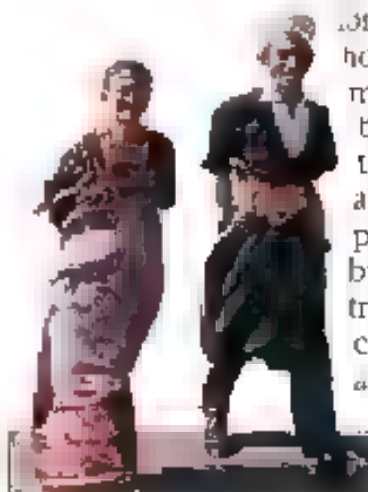
The Talakaveri shrine, a place of great religious significance

THE KODAVAS

The people of Kodagu, known as Kodavas, are a distinct ethnic group, and have their own language, Coorgi. The Kodavas are proud of their martial origins and the country's armed forces have had a fair number of generals from this community. They may no




longer live in the huge four-winged homes called *ath mane*, but their many traditional festivals, celebrated with great elan, still bring them together. Coorgi weddings are unique in that there are no priests and they are solemnized by elders. The men dress in traditional *kupyas* or long black coats tied at the waist by a gold- and red-tasseled sash, while

women wear Coorgi-style saris with pleats at the back. Their distinctive cuisine includes tangy pork curry served with rice dumplings.



A Kodava couple in traditional dress

Melkote ②

Mandya district 54 km (34 miles) N of Mysore  Tourist Office, (08232 238 777   vairamudi@MarrApr.com




A picturesque hill town of shrines and monasteries Melkote is a major pilgrimage centre for devotees of Vishnu; it is also associated with Ramanuja, the renowned Hindu philosopher and social reformer who died in 1157. Ramanuja is worshipped along with Vishnu in the **Narayana Temple**, in the southern part of town. South of the temple stands a solitary gopura, while perched on the summit of a hill to the northeast of the town is the small **Narasimha Shrine** overlooking the large Kalyani Tank.

Daily life in Melkote revolves around temple rituals, and the tradition of religious learning introduced by Ramanuja survives in as many institutions, of which the Academy of Sanskrit Research is most famous.



Narasimha Shrine overlooking the Kalyani Tank at Melkote

Sravana Belgola ③

Hassan district 145 km (90 miles) W of Bangalore  Tourist Office, (08176, 257 254   Mahamastakabhisheka@every12years.com (every 12 years, last one was in 2005).

This small town, situated between two granite hills Indragiri and Chandragiri is the most important Jain site in South India. It is dominated by the colossal 17.7-m (58-ft) high monolithic **Statue of Gommateshvara**, also known as Bahubali, son of the first Jain tirthankara (see p396). On the summit of the 143-m (469-ft) high



The head-anointing ceremony at Sravana Belgola

Indragiri Hill, the north-facing statue of the naked saviour stands on an anthill staring impassively ahead. Entwined around his legs and arms are creepers indicating the length of time he stood immobile in meditation. An inscription at the base records its consecration in AD 981 by Chamundaraya, the powerful minister of Rajamalla IV, one of the Ganga kings.

The town, which lies at the base of the hill, has a large tank as well as a number of Jain temples (*bastis*). Perhaps the most interesting of these is the *matha* near the steps leading to Indragiri Hill. The walls of its courtyard have a series of vivid 18th-century murals illustrating the past and present births of Parsvanatha, the 23rd *tirthankara* as well as scenes from the annual fair held here. Some fine Jain bronzes are displayed in the sanctuary that opens off the courtyard.



A view of Chandragiri Hill above Sravana Belgola

On Chandragiri Hill, to the north of the town, is another cluster of *bastis* established by the 10th–12th century Ganga kings and their powerful ministers. The **Neminatha Basti**, commissioned by Chamundaraya, enshrines an image of Neminatha, the 22nd *tirthankara*. The adjoining **Chandragupta Basti** has miniature panels carved on perforated stone screens depicting episodes from the life of Bahubali and his royal disciple, Chandragupta. A 5-m (16-ft) high sculpture of Parsvanatha, the 23rd *tirthankara*, is enshrined in another nearby *basti*.

Every 12 years, Jainism's most important festival, the spectacular Mahamastakabhisheka (head-anointing ceremony) is held here. The festival commemorates the consecration of the Bahubali monolith and attracts thousands of monks, priests and pilgrims. A special scaffold is erected behind the statue so that priests can ritually bathe the god with milk, water from the holy rivers, ghee, saffron, sandalwood paste, vermilion and flower petals. At the last ceremony held in 1993, a specially-hired helicopter flew overhead, showering the statue with 20 kg (44 pounds) of gold leaf, 200 litres (423 pints) of milk, mangoes and jewels, to the delight of the assembled crowds.

Environs

The village of **Kambadahalli** 15 km (9 miles) east of Sravana Belgola is another Jain settlement. The 14th-century Panchakuta Basti houses a trio of *tirthankaras* in three separate shrines.



A columned Nandi pavilion in the Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebid

Halebid

Hassan district 213 km (132 miles) W of Bangalore Hassan, 27 km (17 miles) S of town centre, then bus or taxi Cycles available on hire Tourist Office, (08177) 273 224

Set amid a lush agricultural landscape, ringed by distant hills, this isolated site was the Hoysala capital in the 12th and 13th centuries. While the palace has yet to be excavated, the stone ramparts that once surrounded the city are still to be seen. Outside the ramparts to the east is the vast tank known as Dorasamudra, which was also the city's original name.

Today the principal attraction of Halebid is the **Hoysaleswara Temple** begun in 1121 by King Vishnuvardhana, but never finished. This structure comprises a pair of identical temples, each with its own east-facing *anga* sanctuary opening on to a hall and a screened porch. Each temple is also preceded by a pavilion with a huge statue of Nandi, the bull-vehicle of Shiva. As the two halls are joined together to create a spacious columned interior, the temples function as a single monument. The outer walls are elevated on friezes of naturalistic and fanciful animals, interspersed with animated carvings of scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* (see pp26–7). Among the finest wall panels here are those of Shiva dancing on the

outstretched skin of the elephant demon he had slain, Krishna playing the flute and Krishna holding up Mount Govardhan, on the south face of the southern sanctuary. On the north face of the northern sanctuary is a splendid Narayana Shiva as the Lord of Dance and a panel depicting a crouching multi-armed and



A magnificent seated Nandi at Halebid

headed Ravana creeping up on Shiva and Parvati, seated on Mount Kanasa. Set on the platform on which the temple is raised is a three-dimensional composition of a warrior plunging his sword into a lionine beast with a ferocious head interpreted as the dynastic symbol of

the martial Hoysala rulers. The landscaped garden in front of the Hoysaleswara Temple serves as an **Archaeological Museum**. A panel here shows a majestic seated Ganesha. A short distance south of the complex is a group of 13th-century Jain *bastis*.

Archaeological Museum

Tel (08177) 263 067 10am–5pm Sat–Thu

Belur

Hassan district 17 km (11 miles) SW of Halebid Hassan, 34 km (21 miles) SE of town centre, then bus or taxi Tourist Office, (08177) 222 209

One of the jewels of South Indian architecture, Belur's **Chennakeshava Temple** was built in 1117 by Vishnuvardhana to commemorate the Hoysala triumph over the Cholas (see pp46–7). At the end of the town's main street, a towered *gopura*, erected by the kings of Vijayanagar (see pp30) in the 16th century, marks the entrance to the temple. Inside is a spacious paved courtyard, surrounded by subsidiary shrines and colonnades. In the centre is the main temple, a single star-shaped sanctuary opening onto a columned hall, fronted by a screened porch.

The entire surface of the grey-green schist structure is covered with richly textured relief carvings. The lintels have four frames running between open-mouthed aquatic monsters (*makaras*) with exuberantly foliated tails. The stone grilles that filter light into the porch are raised on friezes of elephants, lotus stems, garlands and amorous couples. Brackets fashioned as female dancers, musicians and huntresses, standing gracefully under perforated trees, support the sloping eaves above the grilles. Many bear the artists' signatures, a sign of their elevated status under the Hoysalas. Even finer bracket figures can be seen inside the temple.

Chennakeshava Temple

Tel (08177) 222 218 daily to non-Hindus



Belur's Chennakeshava Temple, in the centre of a large courtyard

Hoysala Art and Architecture

The temples of the Hoysala kings (12th–13th centuries) and their powerful ministers are among the wonders of South Indian art and architecture. They embody a fusion of the curving towers (*shikharas*) of North India with the columned *mandapas* of the south, and are characterized by their



Frieze with mythological scene

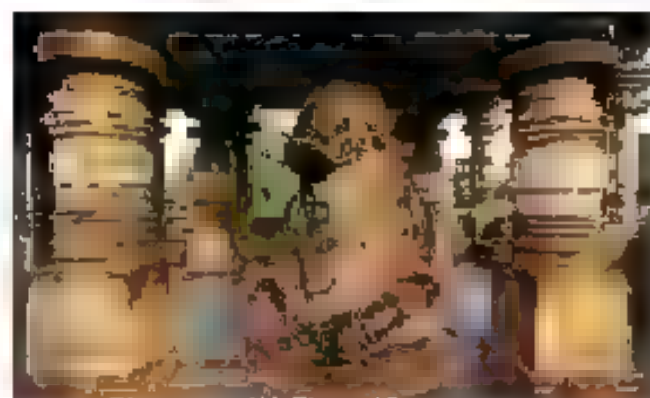
unique star-shaped plan and their rich surface decoration. The dense imagery of the basement friezes and wall panels, sculpted with religious and mythological scenes as well as the exquisite bracket figures, are fashioned out of grey-green schist, a material that permits beautifully intricate carving.



Gods seated with their consorts, such as this remarkable rendering of the Lakshmi-Narayana, are carved in full detail and set into the outer walls of Hoysala temples.



Flowing foliate patterns, derived from lotus stems and leaves, run continuously around the basements of Hoysala temples.



Mandapa interiors have spacious aistyles lined with massive, highly polished lathe-turned columns, with undulating profiles and sharp ridges. A good example is this magnificent Nandi pavilion opposite the main shrine at Halebidu.

Bracket figures

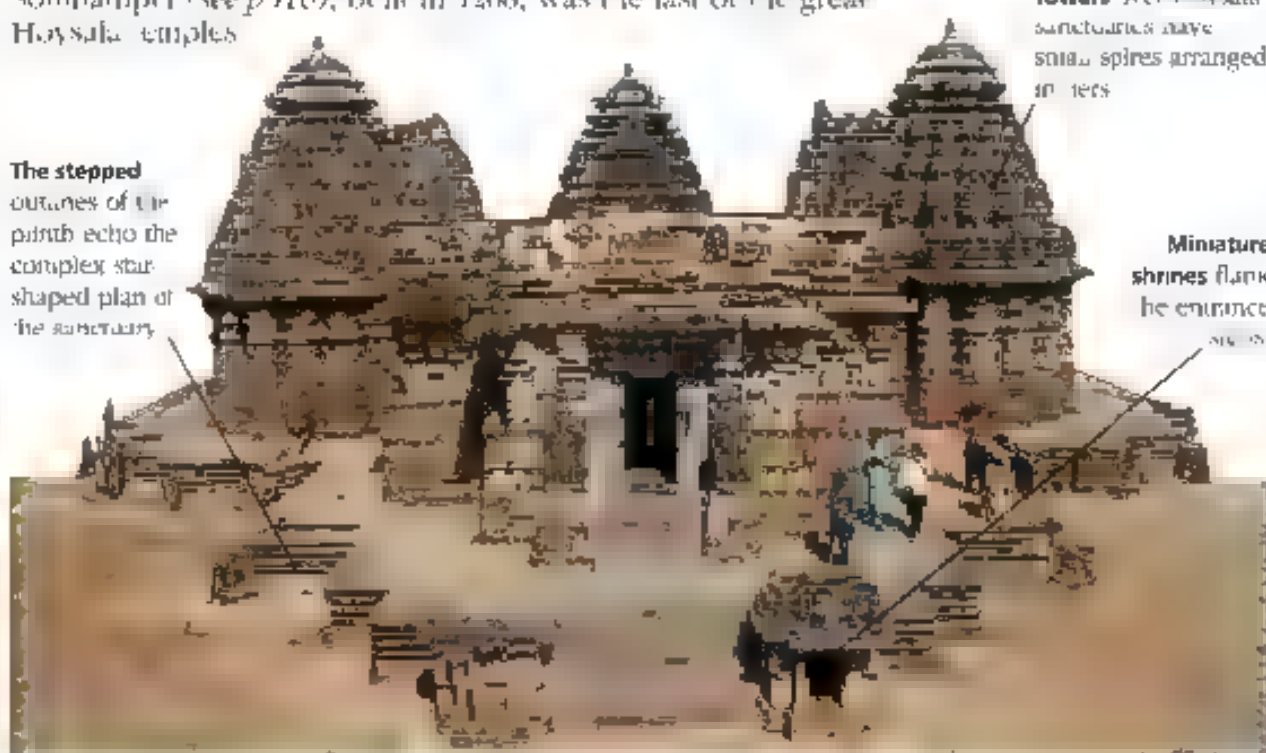
fashioned as beautiful female dancers, are the highlights of Hoysala temples. This sculpture of a female drummer from Belur has an engraving of the artist's signature.



THE SOMNATHPUR TEMPLE

The perfectly proportioned triple-sanctuated Keshava Temple at Somnathpur (see p516), built in 1268, was the last of the great Hoysala temples.

The stepped outlines of the prabhav echo the complex star-shaped plan of the sanctuary.



Towers over Hoysala sanctuaries have spiral spires arranged in tiers.

Miniature shrines flank the entrance.



Terracotta-tiled rooftops in Mangalore

Mangalore ⑪

South Kanara district, 357 km (222 miles) W of Bangalore 399,000 20 km (12 miles) N of city centre, then taxi or bus. Karnataka Tourism, Hotel Indraprastha, (0824) 242 1692

This thriving port on the estuary of the Netavati and Gurpur rivers is the largest city in Dakshina (South) Kanara, the coastal district famous for its coffee, cashew nut and pepper plantations. Rich harvests of these crops have attracted traders through the ages. Arab merchants first came here in the 13th and 14th centuries, and were later followed by the Portuguese and the British.

Mangalore today, presents a panorama of terracotta-roofed houses, whitewashed churches, temples and mosques, nestling amid groves of coconut palms. Among its historic monuments is the old watchtower known as **Sultan's Battery**, built of latente in 1763 by Haider Ali of Mysore (see p518).

Mangalore's 19th-century churches include the domed Church of the Most Holy Rosary and the Jesuit College of St Aloysius. Situated at the foot of Kadin Hill, 3 km (2 miles) north of the city, is the 17th-century **Manjunath Temple**, with some superb bronze images of the Buddha dating to the 10th–11th centuries, installed in the porch

Environs

The pleasant beach resort at **Ullal** is just 12 km (7 miles) south of the city. Numerous Jain temples and monasteries dot the villages around Mangalore. The finest is the elaborate 15th-century Chandranatha Basti at **Mudabidri**, 35 km (22 miles) to the northwest. Dominating the summit of a hill at **Karkala**, 18 km (11 miles) farther north, is the 13-m (43-ft) high Gommateshvara monolith (1432), an obvious imitation of the larger and earlier one at Sravana Belgola (see

p522). The 16th-century Chaturmukha Basti, a perfectly symmetrical temple with a central chamber enshrining 12 *trithankaras*, stands at the base of the hill. The pilgrimage town of **Dharmasthala**, 75 km (47 miles) to the east, is well-known for its Shiva temple. Its Gommateshvara statue was installed in 1973.

Udupi ⑫

Udupi district, 58 km (36 miles) N of Mangalore 113,100 Tourist Office, Krishna Building, Car Street, (0820) 252 9718. Pargaya (Jan.), Chariot Festival (Aug.)

All roads in Udupi lead to the large open square in the city centre where the **Krishna Temple** is located. This is the focal point of all activity spiritual and commercial, in this bustling pilgrim town. The

famous 13th-century Vaishnava teacher, Madhava, is believed to have founded the temple by installing an image of Krishna he had rescued from a shipwreck. Parked outside the temple are the festival chariots with dome-like towers made of bamboo and covered with colourful textiles. After passing through the entrance gate, pilgrims bathe in the tank before entering the main sanctuary with its silver doors and viewing window. Surrounding the square are other temples and the eight *mathas* associated with the Krishna Temple, built in the typical Kanara style with wooden verandahs and sloping roofs.

Udupi also lends its name to the inexpensive eateries that originated here. Catering to a local clientele, the menu concentrated on traditional South Indian vegetarian food, such as the *masala dosa* and *idli* (see pp554–5). These restaurants, with their affordable rates, quick turnover and simple but good food, are now found all over India.

Environs

About 5 km (3 miles) west of Udupi is **Malpe Beach**, where fishing boats can be hired for excursions. **Manipal**, 4 km (2.5 miles) to the east, is an industrial and educational centre. The **House of Vijayanath Shennoy** in Manipal, now a museum, is an example of a traditional home, with a fine collection of everyday objects.

House of Vijayanath Shennoy

Mon–Sat



Priests performing rituals during the Chariot Festival at Udupi



Shop selling religious paraphernalia at Barkur

Barkur 13

Udupi district 71 km (44 miles) N of Mangalore Navaratri (Sep/Oct)

The coastal town of Barkur was a flourishing port in the 5th and 16th centuries until its river silted up. Today, the town's main attractions are its many temples with their typical sloping terracotta-tiled roofs. The largest is the **Panchalingeshvara Temple**, situated at the southern end of the town. Devotees gather at the stepped tank near the temple for a ritual bath before worshipping at the two east-facing linga shrines. The other temples include one dedicated to both Shiva and Ganesha, and the smaller Someshvara and Somnatheshvara temples.

Environs

The little hamlet of **Mekkekattu** 8 km (5 miles) north of Barkur has some of painted *bhuta* figures (local spirits). These are copies of the originals, which were removed to New Delhi's Crafts Museum (see pp80–81) and the Folklore Museum in Mysore (see p519), after the shrine's renovation in the 1960s. The vividly painted deity Nandikesavara (the winged bull) stands in the lower shrine while his consort occupies the upper one. Pierce guardian deities crowd a side chamber.

Bhatkal 14

North Kanara district 165 km (102 miles) N of Mangalore 31,800 Navaratri (Sep/Oct)

Located along a picturesque highway that follows the coastline, this town was an important port during the 16th and 17th centuries. The many beautiful Jain and Hindu stone temples found here date from those days of prosperity. Standing in the town's main street are the Chandranatheshvara and Parsvanatha *bustis*. Situated 2 km (1.3 miles) to the east, on the other side of the



Detail of a stone panel, Bhatkal

highway, is the **Khetapal Narayan Temple** (see p151). Its sanctuary and hall are enclosed within stone screens fashioned to imitate wood. Finely sculpted guardian figures flank the doorway.

BEACHES AROUND GOKARNA

Long stretches of beautiful, unspoilt beaches extend along the western coast from Gokarna to Karwar, a seaside town 60 km (37 miles) to the north. South of Gokarna are the Half Moon and Paradise beaches, while nearer Karwar are the lovely Binaga and Araga beaches. The gently curving bays fringed by palms are still occupied by small fishing villages where life revolves around the sea and the daily catch. Tourism remains unknown and only a few simple shacks offer basic food and shelter.

Environs

Tucked away in the forested hills at **Kollur** 35 km (22 miles) southeast of Bhatkal is a shrine dedicated to the goddess Makambika. This is a very popular pilgrimage.

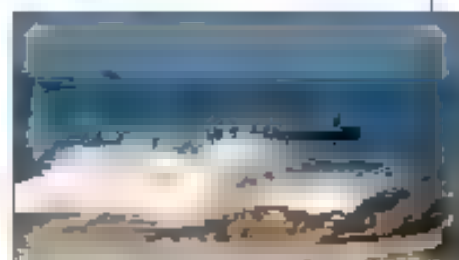
India's highest waterfall, the **Jog Falls**, lies 60 km (37 miles) northeast of Bhatkal. They can be seen at the head of the Sharavati river framed by jagged pinnacles of rock.

Gokarna 15

North Kanara district 200 km (124 miles) N of Mangalore Tourist Office, Main Rd. Karwar, (08382) 221 172 Shivratri (Feb/Mar)

Spectacularly situated by the Arabian Sea, Gokarna is a favourite with visitors in search of sun, sea and sand. A charming little town with two principal streets and clusters of traditional tile-roofed brick houses, Gokarna is also an important centre of Sanskrit learning.

The **Mahabaleshvara Temple** at the western end of the main street, was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1714 and then rebuilt later in the 18th century. In the sanctuary is a stone linga encased in brass, placed on a coiled stone serpent. The floor of the hall in front has an intricate engraving of a giant tortoise. Shiva's birthday (Feb/Mar) is celebrated here with great fanfare. The two great temple chariots lead a procession through the town's narrow streets, while priests chant hymns in praise of Shiva.



Waves breaking against rocks at a beach near Karwar



The two-storeyed Vidyashankara Temple at Sringeri

Sringeri ⑩

Chikmagalur district 100 km (62 miles) NE of Mangalore
 Navaratri (Sep/Oct)

The small settlement of Sringeri, tucked away in the forested ranges of the Western Ghats, is today an important pilgrimage centre and one of the most powerful seats of orthodox Hinduism in South India. This was where Shankaracharya, (see p648), the great 9th-century philosopher and social reformer, established the first of his four *mathas*; the other three are at Joshimath in the Himalayas (see p187), Puri (see p312) to the east and Dwarka (see p427) to the west. Today, his successors (also known as Shankaracharyas) wield tremendous influence in both

religious and temporal matters, while the *mathas* still function as centres of spiritual learning.

Standing on a paved terrace are two temples overlooking the Tunga river, crammed with sacred fish. The smaller temple, dedicated to Sharada, a popular form of the goddess Saraswati, is the principal destination for local pilgrims. Next to it is



Floral offerings at Sringeri's temple

the 16th-century **Vidyashankara Temple** where the Shankaracharya is worshipped in the form of a *linga*.

This stone structure which stands raised on a high platform is laid out on an

almost circular star-shaped plan. Friezes depicting the many forms of Shiva and Vishnu embellish the faceted walls. The hall that precedes the inner sanctum has massive piers carved as rearing *yalis* (mythical leonine beasts,

Chitradurga ⑪

Chitradurga district 200 km (124 miles) N of Bangalore Kamana Bhavi Extension, 8th Ward Fort Rd, (08194, 234 466)

Located at the base of a rugged chain of hills, this town was a prominent outpost of the Vijayanagar Empire (see pp330–33) later in the 17th–18th centuries it became the headquarters of a line of local chiefs known as Bedas, until it was occupied by Haider Ali (see p517) in 1799 and then by the British.

The **Fort**, defined by walls of huge granite blocks, rises above the town. A series of three gates leads to the irregular inner zone, strewn with striking granite boulders. There are several small temples here, as well as a number of ceremonial gateways erected by the Bedas. The platforms and pavilions within the compound of the Sompige Siddheshvara Temple mark the spot where the Bedas were crowned. The remains of rubble and mud-built granaries and residences, and a large circular well can be seen nearby.

In the town below, the local **Government Museum** displays artifacts from surrounding sites. The 17th-century Uchcharangamma Temple is on the main street and should not be missed.

Fort

daily

Government Museum

Tel (08194, 224 202) Mon–Sat



The fort at Chitradurga, with gateways and shrines dotting the boulder-strewn landscape

A view of Hampi, with a ruined bridge over the Tungabhadra river in the foreground ▷





Hampi 18



Sculpted staircase,
Mahanavami platform

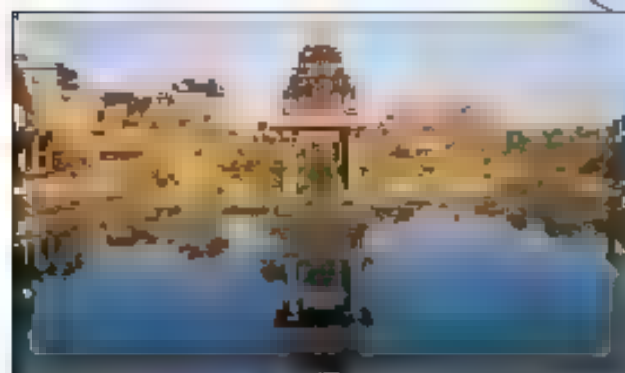
A UNESCO World Heritage Site on the south bank of the Tungabhadra river, Hampi boasts the evocative ruins of Vijayanagar or the "City of Victory". The capital of three generations of Hindu rulers for more than 200 years, Hampi reached its zenith under Krishnadeva Raya (r 1510–29)

and Achyuta Raya (r 1529–42). The site, which comprises the Sacred and Royal Centres, has a superb location, with rocky ridges and granite boulders acting as natural defences. The urban core of the city was fortified and separated from the Sacred Centre by an irrigated valley through which ancient canals and waterways still run.



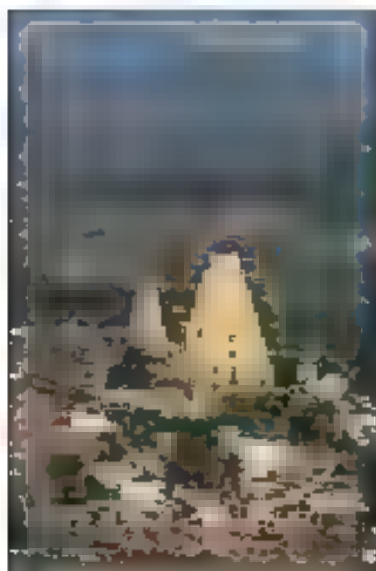
King's Balance

Ruling kings were weighed on this balance against gold or grain, for distribution to the poor.



Krishna Temple

Krishnadeva Raya erected this temple in 1516 to commemorate his victory over Orissa. It is no longer a place of worship.



★ Virupaksha Temple

The ancient temple of Virupaksha, dedicated to the goddess Pampa and her consort Shiva, is dominated by a 50-m (164 ft) high gopura. This is the principal place of worship in Hampi.

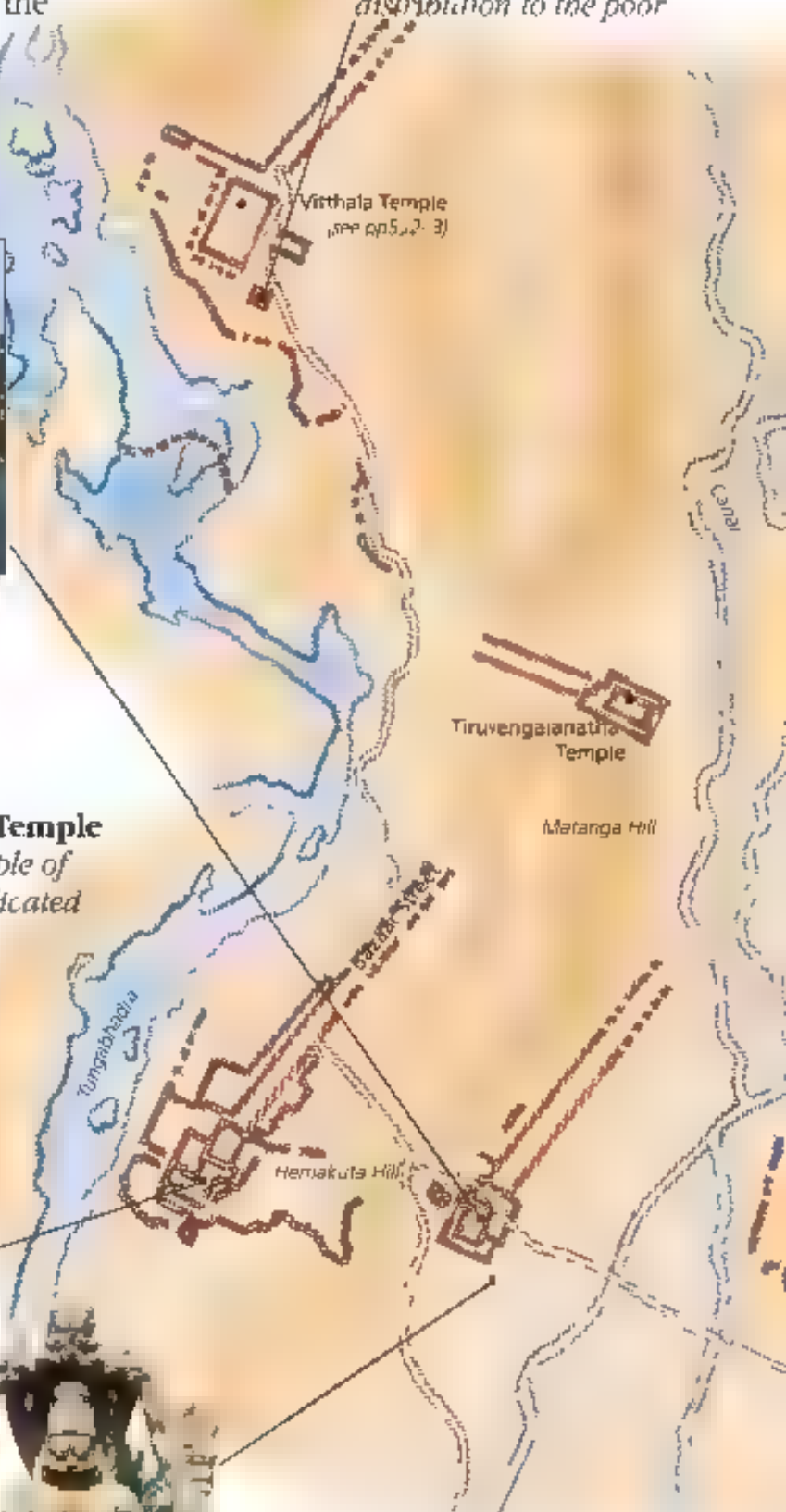
STAR SIGHTS

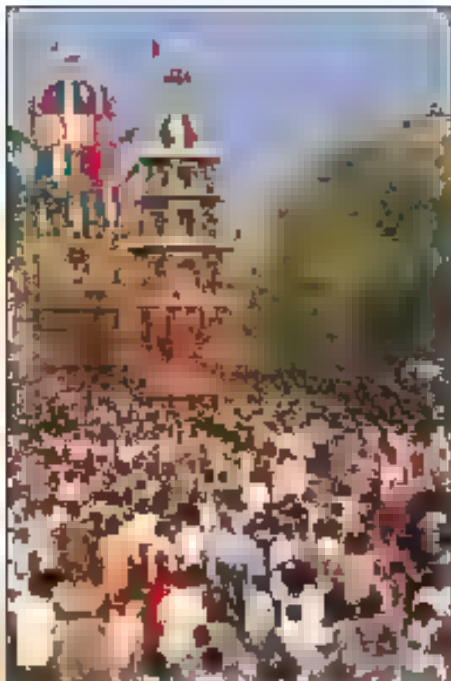
- ★ Virupaksha Temple
- ★ Narasimha Monolith
- ★ Lotus Maha



★ Narasimha Monolith

Carved out of a single boulder in 1528, this awe-inspiring image of Vishnu shows him in his half-man, half-lion incarnation (see p679).





Chariot Festival

The bustling Bazaar Street is the main centre of activity and the venue for the colourful Chariot Festival. The temple chariot carries the main deity through the streets so it can be publicly honoured.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bellary district, 315 km (196 miles) NW of Bangalore. Hospet, 13 km (8 miles), W of site. Bazaar St. (08394) 228 537. **Virupaksha Temple** daily. **Lotus Mahal** also covers the Vittala Temple Chariot Festival (Feb), Hampi Festival (Nov). Foreigners must register at Virupaksha Temple Police Station.



Elephant Stables

An imposing structure of 11 chambers, this once housed the royal elephants. Especially noteworthy are the polygonal roofs, alternating with smooth or ribbed domes.

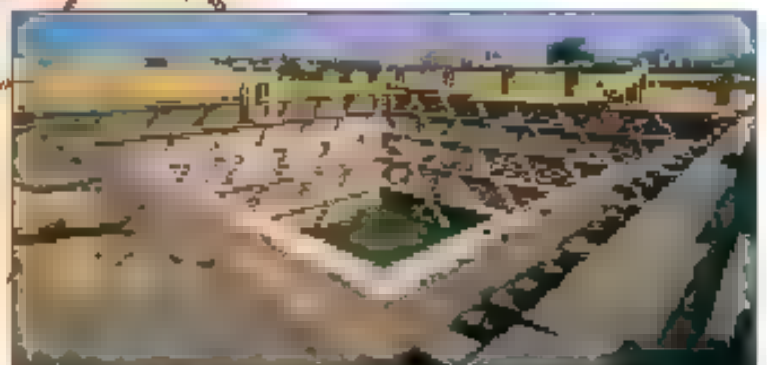
★ Lotus Mahal

A skilful blend of Hindu and Islamic architecture, this building may have served as a council chamber for the king.



The Queen's Bath, an open air structure, seems to have been designed for royal recreation.

The Mahanavami Platform was used by kings during the Mahanavami festival (see p517) and for pre-war ceremonies.



Stepped Tank

This small square tank with multiple steps was fed by a water chute, part of an extensive hydraulic system that brought water to the Royal Centre.

0 metres 500
0 yards 500



St.

Tiruvengalanatha Temple

Hazara Ramachandra Temple
Ruined Palaces

Great Bath

Archaeological Museum

Hampi: Vitthala Temple

The grandest of all the religious monuments in the Sacred Centre, the Vitthala Temple represents the high point of Vijayanagar art and architecture. Though its founder remains unknown, it was enlarged in the 16th century by

two of Vijayanagar's greatest rulers, Krishnadeva Raya and Achyuta Raya. Preceding the main shrine is the great open hall, or *mahamandapa*, built on a low platform and supported by intricately carved pillars. This was the gift of a military commander in 1554, just 11 years before the city was sacked and abandoned.



★ Yalis

Leaping yalis (mythical leonine beasts), many with riders, adorn the outer piers of the temple.



RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TOWER

This shows the pyramidal vimana (tower) over the main sanctuary of the Vitthala Temple as it looked when it was built in the 16th century.



Relief

A niche in a stone pillar has a superb rendering of Garuda, the eagle mount of Vishnu.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Yalis
- ★ Chariot

Exploring Hampi

The faded city of the Vijayanagar kings (see pp530–31) covering an area of around 20 sq km (8 sq miles), sprawls across a spectacular barren and boulder-strewn landscape.

The **Sacred Centre** on the southern bank of the Tungabhadra river, is dominated by the impressive **Virupaksha Temple**. It is dedicated to a form of Shiva (Virupaksha), known here as Pampapati (the "Lord of Pampa"), and commemorates his wedding to Pampa, the goddess of the Tungabhadra. In front is the colonnaded **Bazaar Street** that dates mainly from the 16th to the mid-17th centuries, when it teemed with pilgrims and travelers in search of exotic wares. A path beside the river leads past the **Kodandarama Temple** with its figures of Rama, Sita and

Lakshman carved on to a boulder inside the sanctuary. The bathing ghats here are considered to be the holiest at the site.

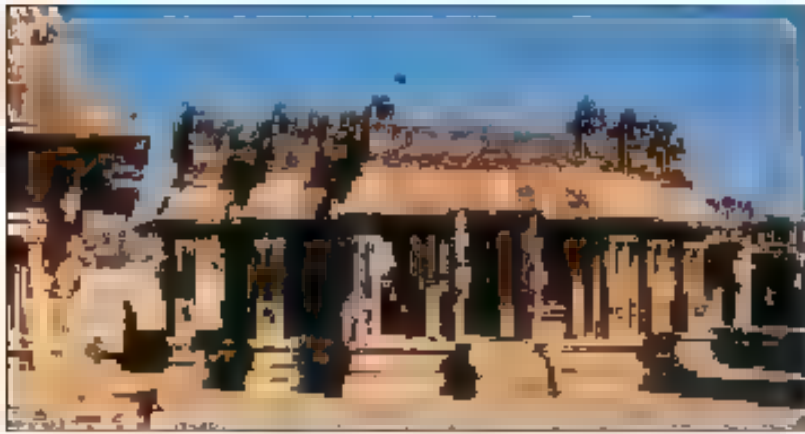
Beyond lies the **Temple of Achyuta Raya**, one of the major Hindu complexes at Hampi, dating from 1541 and dedicated to Tiruvengalanatha (the form of Vishnu that is venerated at Tirupati (see pp678). Its perfect plan of two concentric enclosures, each entered by a towering gopura to the north, is clearly visible from the summit of **Matanga Hill**. The riverside path continues to the Vitthala Temple, from where a road proceeds to the village of

Kamalapuram where the **Archaeological Museum** is located. En route is a gateway with a damaged façade of windows and battlements.

The road that runs south from Hampi village, through the Sacred Centre, leads up **Hemakuta Hill**, scattered with numerous pre- and early Vijayanagar shrines, many with small pyramidal towers. A large image of the elephant god, Ganesha, carved on a



A view of Matanga Hill

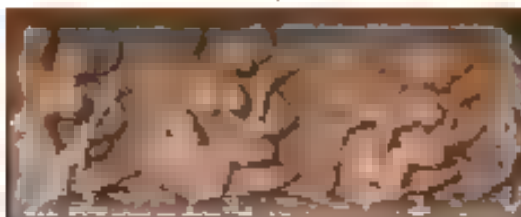
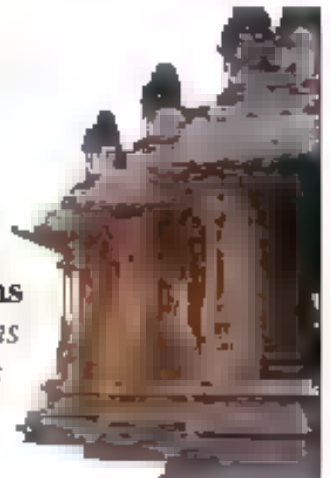


Vitthala Temple

This striking temple with its elaborate mandapas (columned halls) is dedicated to Vitthala, an incarnation of Vishnu the Preserver, the second god in the Hindu Trinity

Musical Columns

Small hollow columns emit different tones when lightly tapped



Frieze Detail

This panel depicts a trio of celestial nymphs riding on parrots

★ Chariot

This shrine in front of the temple is dedicated to Garuda and is fashioned as a stone chariot



Chariot

boulder marks the top of the ridge. Further south is the **Krishna Temple**, erected in the early 16th century during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya. It is entered through a massive, though partly ruined gopura. The colonnaded street to the east now runs through fields of sugarcane, while the square tank nearby still stores water. As it continues south, the road travels past the tremendous Narasimha Stone Monolith, a representation of Vishnu's man-lion incarnation (see p679).

Fortified walls enclose the **Royal Centre**. At the latter's core is the superb **Hazara Rama Temple**, built by Deva Raya I, a Vijayanagar king of the 15th century. Its outer walls are covered with friezes that depict ceremonies of the Mahanavami festival. Reliefs of episodes from the Ramayana can be seen here. Around



A coracle ferrying people across the Tungabhadra river

the temple are excavated remains of palaces, baths and a hundred-columned audience hall, while to its north are the Elephant Stables and the **Lotus Mahal**.

🏛 Archaeological Museum

Kamatapuram, (08394) 241 237
☐ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu

Environs

The historic village of **Anegondi** lies on the opposite bank of the Tungabhadra river. Until a bridge under construction becomes operational, it can be reached only on the coracles that have plied the river for centuries.

An important settlement before the establishment of Vijayanagar, Anegondi's now dilapidated palaces, temples and bathing ghats still preserve vestiges of their former glory. The Kalyan Mahal, a palace-like building reminiscent of Hampi's Lotus Mahal (see p531), stands in the central square. Nearby are a temple and a 14th-century gateway. The massive walls and rounded bastions of Anegondi's citadel enclose the rocky hills lying west of the main town. Anegondi is also of interest for its traditional mud-brick houses.



An outer wall of Gadag's Someshvara Temple, with temple towers in relief

Gadag 19

Gadag district 450 km (280 miles), NW of Bangalore 🚗 📶 📶 Hotel Durga, Vihar Complex 🕒 daily

An important cotton collection centre, the sleepy little town of Gadag comes to life during the cotton season in May and June. During these months the cotton market hums with activity and is well worth a visit.

A number of late Chalukyan monuments (11th–12th centuries) in the city indicate its historic past. Standing to the south is the **Trikuteshvara Temple**, remarkable for its three sanctuaries facing a common party open hall. Inclined slabs that serve as balcony seats are decorated with figurative panels and are overhung by steeply angled eaves. Inside the hall, the columns have figures arranged in shallow niches. The east sanctuary accommodates three lingas, while the one to the south is dedicated to the goddess Saraswati.

In the middle of the city stands the **Someshvara Temple**. Though abandoned and now in a dilapidated state, its intricate carvings are fairly well preserved. Look for the doorways to the hall, which have densely carved figures and foliation.

Environs

The small village of **Lakkundi**, 11 km (7 miles) south-east of Gadag, has temples dating from the 11th–12th centuries, built of grey-green chloritic schist. Surrounded by mud houses, a number of such temples are tucked away down narrow streets. Jan Basti, the largest temple, has a five-storeyed tower. Its basement is adorned with friezes of elephants and lotus petals. Lathe-turned columns are seen on the porch. The nearby Kashi Vishvanatha Temple has a pair of sanctuaries facing each other across a common porch. Relief carvings of a pair of *makaras* or aquatic monsters, sitting on the walls, are typical motifs of late Chalukyan art.



Sculpted figures



The elliptical fort at Belgaum

Belgaum 20

Belgaum district 502 km (312 miles), NW of Bangalore 🚗 📶 📶 Tourist Office, Ashoka Nagar, (0831) 247 0879

This bustling city, on the border with Maharashtra, was an important garrison town under the British. Even today, the cantonment, with its bungalows and barracks, has a significant military presence. Earlier, in the 16th and 17th centuries, Belgaum was a provincial centre under the Adil Shahi rulers of Bijapur (see p542), the Marathas of Pune (see p471), as well as the Mughals when they occupied this part of Karnataka. The **Fort** to the east is unusually elliptical in layout and its stone walls incorporate many reused temple blocks. The **Safa Mosque** nearby was built in the first half of the 16th century by Asad Khan, the governor of Belgaum. The town also has three temples that date to the late Chalukyan period.

Performing Arts of Karnataka

Karnataka has a rich and vibrant performing arts tradition. Story telling, with the help of media such as paintings and leather puppets, was among the most popular folk entertainments in the northern and northeastern part of the state and in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh before the advent of the cinema. Itinerant folk performers would delight rural audiences with



String puppet

stirring tales of good and evil, based on mythological episodes. A number of dance-dramas, such as the Yakshagana, developed in South Kanara – the region of Karnataka that borders Kerala. As in Kathakali (see p657), Yakshagana actors dress in awe-inspiring costumes to perform a heavily mimetic dance while the singer recites the story to the accompaniment of music.



Figures are etched on the prepared skin with a sharp instrument, then cut along the outline and coloured.

KARNATAKA'S LEATHER PUPPETS

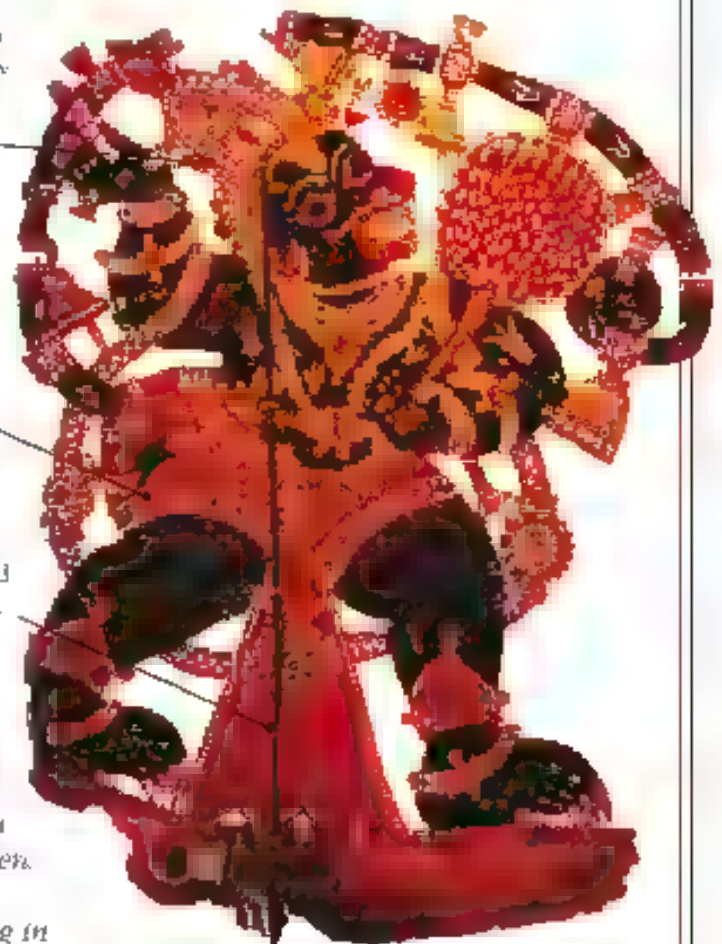
Huge figures made of goatskin are punched with holes of various shapes to allow light to filter through, thus creating the interplay of light and coloured shadow, so essential to shadow theatre. The chief puppeteer recites the story, while his assistants provide musical accompaniment.

Perforations on the figure allow light to pass through.

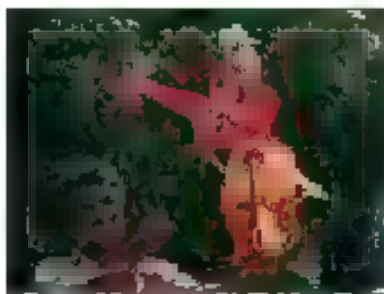
Bright colours and outlines are combined to create striking effects.

A stick is attached for manipulation.

Performances take place at night. A light is placed behind a thin cotton screen, so that the audience, sitting in front, sees the moving shadows.



Hanuman, the Monkey God, a major character in the Ramayana.

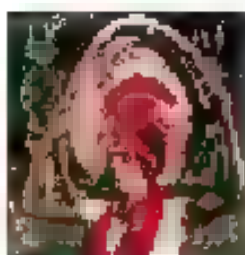


The chief puppeteer manipulates the puppet with the help of an attached stick.

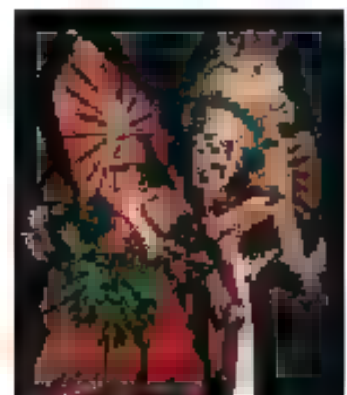


YAKSHAGANA

This folk dance-drama originated in the early 16th century. An all-male cast consisting of about 20 actors and musicians act out a repertoire that is inspired mainly by episodes from the great epics (see pp26–7), especially the Mahabharata. All night performances, organized at the behest of a wealthy patron on special occasions, take place in the open, and no particular props are needed. Yakshagana's spectacular costumes are enhanced by tall headdress, a profusion of ornaments and elaborate make-up.



A man creating the elaborate headgear.



Actors performing a scene from the Mahabharata.

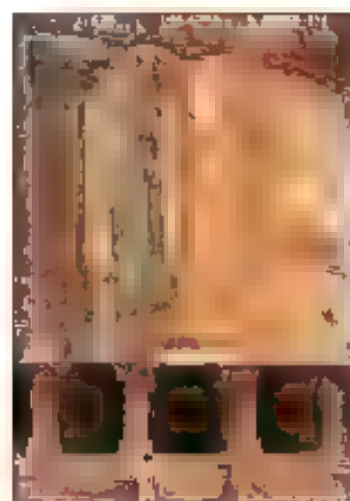
Badami 21



Coiled Serpent,
Ceiling, Cave 1

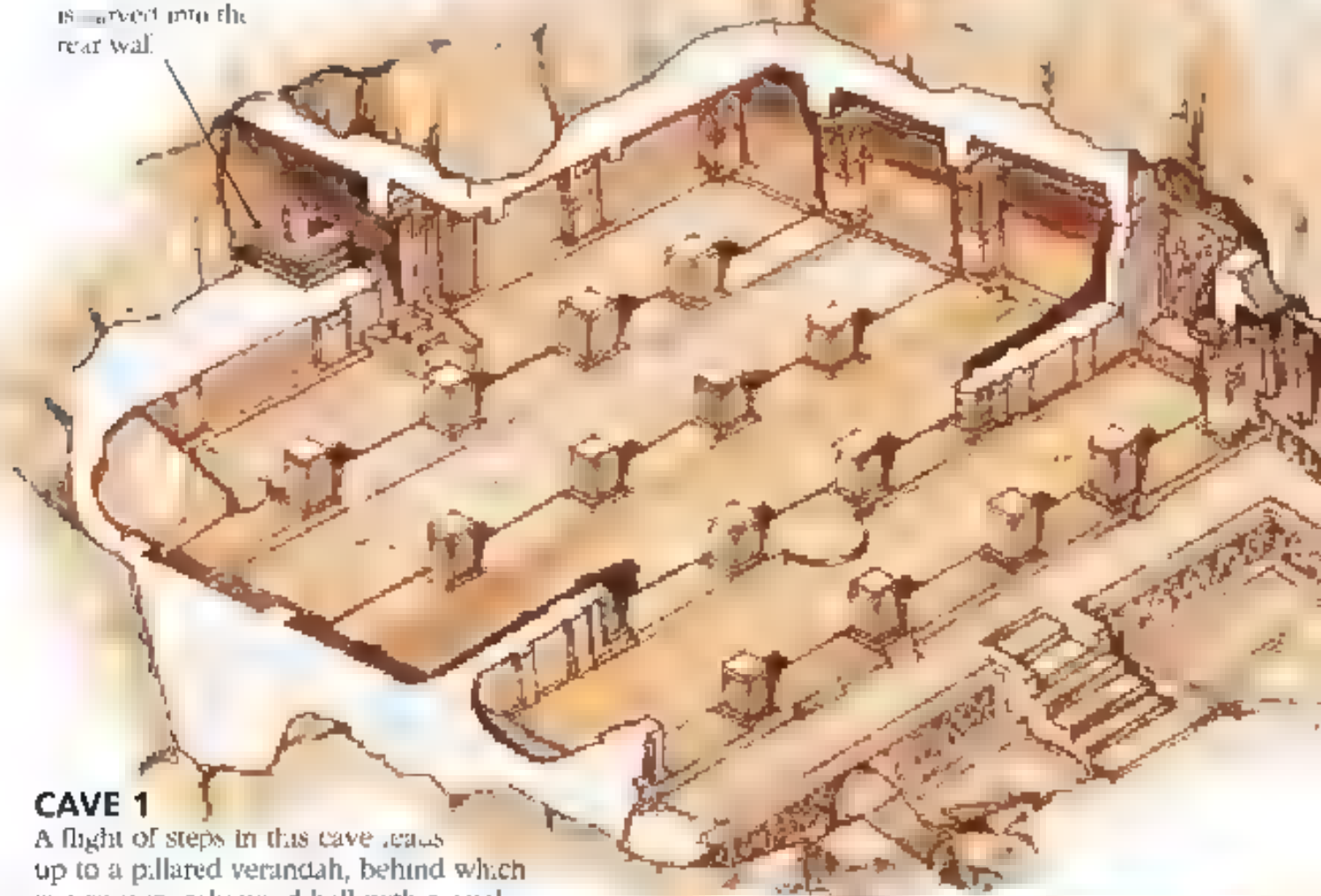
Dramatically situated within a horseshoe of red sandstone cliffs, overlooking the green waters of a large lake, this historic town was the capital of the powerful early Chalukya kings, who ruled the Deccan during the 6th–7th centuries AD. These rulers also held sway at Pattadakal (see pp538–9) and Aihole (see pp540–41).

Among the rock-cut and structural monuments, the most richly decorated are the cave temples, which are carved into the cliff on the southern side. Of these, Cave 1 is dedicated to Shiva, Caves 2 and 3 to Vishnu, and Cave 4 to the Jain saints.



Columned verandah, Cave 3

A linga sanctuary
is carved into the
rear wall.



CAVE 1

A flight of steps in this cave leads up to a pillared verandah, behind which is a square, columned hall with a small sanctuary carved into the rear wall. The highlights here are the Nataraja panel and the carved panels on the ceiling.



Cave 2

This Vaishnava cave has a superb frieze of Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu, on one end of the porch. A row of dwarfs is carved below it.



Cave 3

The verandah of this large and beautiful cave has an enormous four-armed figure of Vishnu seated on Adisesha, the serpent whose five hoods spread protectively over his crown. At his feet is the bird Garuda, his mount. This is the only cave with an inscription, dated AD 578.



Nataraja Panel

This 12-armed dancing Shiva is one of the earliest and finest depictions of the Nataraja in Karnataka.



Cave 4

Standing and seated Jain tirthankaras cover the walls and columns in Cave 4, on top of a cliff. Some of these were added in the 11th and 12th centuries, when this part of Karnataka was governed by a later line of Chalukya rulers.

Exploring Badami

Most of Badami's temples are situated on the imposing cliff that lies north of the man-made Agastya Lake. The boulder-strewn landscape and the large lake acted as natural defences of the site. Standing on the embankment is the 11th-century **Yellamma Temple** with its multi-storeyed tower. Further away, inside the village, is the **Jambulinga Temple**, dating to AD 699, with triple shrines dedicated to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva opening off a common *mandapa*. The **Bhutanatha Temple** is scenically located at the end of the lake and was built in several phases. The core shrine, with a pyramidal tower, is from the 6th–7th centuries, while the porch, embellished with angled eaves and overlooking the water, dates to the 11th century. Several boulders lying around the temple have reliefs of a sleeping Vishnu, and a seated Jain figure. Lesser shrines nearby show the pyramidal layered towers that are typical of the late Chalukya style.

The **Archaeological Museum**, on the north side of the lake, displays a magnificent triangular panel depicting Brahma surrounded by elaborate foliage; this piece must have once surmounted a free-standing portal. Other items of interest include a squatting female divinity with a lotus head, and two panels showing Shiva – spearing a demon and shooting arrows as he rides in a chariot.

Steps ascend through a rugged gorge to the 7th-century **Upper Shivalaya Temple** that crowns the cliffs rising to the north of the town. Only the walls of the passageway and the multi-storeyed tower capped with a square-combed



The tower of the Upper Shivalaya Temple

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bagalkot district 480 km (298 miles) NW of Bangalore

Karnataka Tourism, Hotel Mayura Chalukya, (08357) 220

117 **Caves** ☐ daily

Archaeological Museum Tel: (08352) 220 047 ☐ 10am–5pm, Sat–Thu.

roof still stand, the *mandapa* in front has been dismantled. Its simple basement mouldings and wall plasters are typical of early structural architecture under the Chalukyas.

Diminutive scenes of Krishna holding up

Mount Govardhana and Narasimha disemboweling his victim are carved intricately on the walls. Perched on top of an isolated boulder near the main road north

of the town, is the **Mallegitti Shivalaya Temple**, a well-preserved 7th-century structure. Perforated stone windows flank sculptured panels of Vishnu and Shiva, topped with garlands.

Environs

A popular Devi shrine, facing a large tank dating from the 18th century, is situated at **Banashankarl**, 5 km (3 miles) east of Badami. At **Mahakuta**, 14 km (9 miles) to the east, a group of 7th-century temples built in contrasting North- and South-Indian styles (see p20) are clustered around a small tank.



The Bhutanatha Temple overlooking the tank

Pattadakal 22

The sacred complex at Pattadakal is picturesquely situated on the banks of the Malprabha river. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, its superb 8th-century temples are a fitting climax to the artistic achievements of the Chalukya kings, as seen in neighbouring Badami (see pp536–7) and Aihole (see pp540–41). While these towns were important ancient settlements, Pattadakal, with only a small resident population, was mainly used for royal festivities and coronation ceremonies.

Exploring Pattadakal

The main temple complex is situated in landscaped gardens next to the small village. Built in a combination of the North Indian and South Indian temple styles (see p20), these striking structures reveal a great deal about the evolution of temple architecture in South India.



The modest Galaganatha Temple, built of sandstone

cut tiers of horseshoe-shaped motifs and a ribbed final. The **Kashi Vishvanatha Temple**

which lies to the west, dates from the mid-

8th century and further illustrates the developments in the North Indian temple style. Its faceted tower is entirely covered with a mesh design of inter-

locking horseshoe-arched motifs. The columns inside the small vestibule preceding the sanctum are carved with a variety of mythological scenes.

South Indian-style Temples

South Indian temple towers (*vimanas*) rise in a stepped pyramidal formation, as in the **Sangameshvara Temple**, the earliest in the complex. It was erected by the Chalukya king, Vijayaditya, who died in AD 733 before the structure was completed. Its multistoreyed



Shiva appearing out of the fiery linga, Virupaksha Temple

tower is capped with a square domed roof. The incomplete hall in front has been restored.

The largest temples are the twin **Virupaksha** and **Mallikarjuna Temples** to the south. Both are dedicated to Shiva and were constructed in AD 745 by two sister queens of the powerful Chalukya king Vikramaditya II, to commemorate his victory over the Pallava rulers of Tamil Nadu. These temples represent the climax of early Chalukya architecture and are said to be based on the Kalasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram (see p582). They also served as the inspiration for the colossal Kalasanatha monolith at Ellora (see pp476–8).

Today the Virupaksha Temple is the only functioning shrine in this complex. In



View of the twin Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna Temples, Pattadakal



Nataraja, ceiling panel from the Papanatha Temple

front is a Nandi pavilion with a magnificently carved bull covered by a cloth. The temple itself consists of a spacious, columned hall with triple porches leading to the Linga sanctum, surrounded by a passageway. The ornately carved pillars and ceilings portray mythological and religious stories. The finest reliefs are on either side of the east porch and include one of Shiva as *lingodbhavamurti* appearing out of a fiery Linga and a depiction of Visnu as Trivikrama, traversing the Universe in three steps.

The Mallikarjuna Temple though identical, is smaller and more compact. The carvings on the columns of

the interior hall show scenes from the *Panchatantra*, a collection of fables with bird and animal heroes. The walls surrounding the temple, and the Nandi pavilion in front of it, are incomplete.

A path from the Virupaksha Temple gateway along the river leads to the **Papanatha Temple**. This early 8th-century temple was extended several times, as can be seen in the unusual arrangement of double halls leading to the sanctuary, and in the later addition of passageway walls with porches on three sides. The interesting exterior combines South Indian-style plastered wall niches with North Indian-style mesh patterns and curvilinear towers. Battle scenes from the *Ramayana* (see p27), carved on the east wall, conclude with Ravana's coronation shown on the column of the main porch. Both the halls have central aisles, with pot

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bagalakot district, 22 km (14 miles) NE of Badami. Badami, 14 km (9 miles) SW of town centre. Pattadakal Dance Festival (Jan)

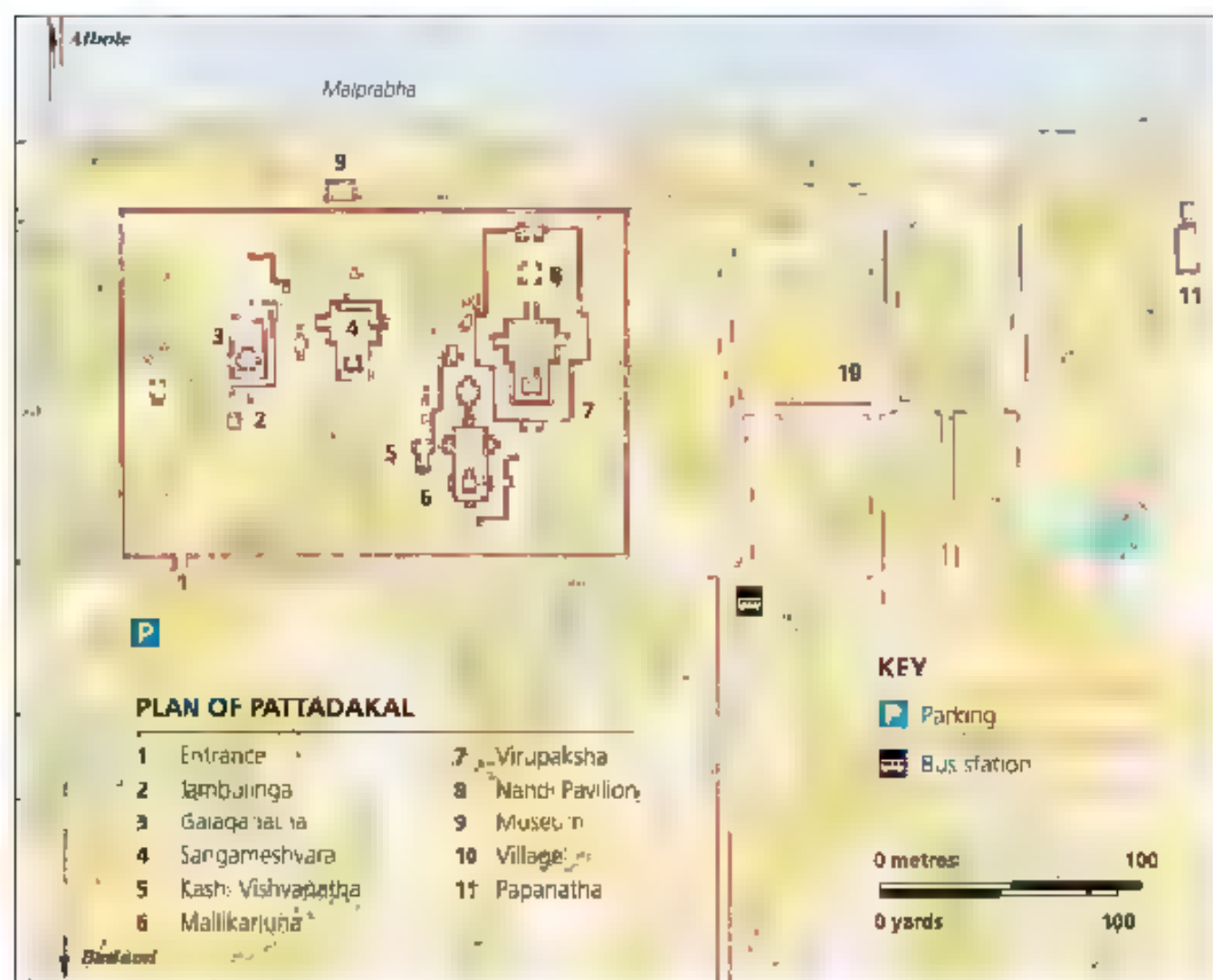
and foliage motifs carved on the capitals. Ornate brackets and beams support ceiling panels, the finest of which show a coiled *naga* (snake, deity) and a Dancing Shiva (Nataraja), in the inner hall.

Jain Temple

To the west of the village, is a 9th-century Jain Temple built by the Rashtrakuta rulers, who succeeded the Chalukyas in the middle of the 8th century. A spacious open porch with peripheral lathe-turned columns is overhanging with angled eaves. Some remarkable carvings of life-size elephant torsos are placed beside the doorway that leads into the inner hall.



Battle between Arjuna and Shiva, Virupaksha Temple





A view of the Gaudar Gudi with the Ladkhan Temple behind it, Aihole

Aihole 23

Bagalkote district, 44 km (27 miles) NE of Badami. Badami, 44 km (27 miles), SW of town, then bus or taxi. Ramalinga Temple
Chant Festival (Feb/Mar)

Time seems to have stood still in this small, dusty town, situated on the Malprana river about 17 km (11 miles) downstream from Pattadakal (see pp538–9). Fortifications encircle much of the town. Well in are ancient sandstone temples of varying types, some of which were used as dwellings and are named after their former inhabitants. The temples are associated with both the early and later Chalukya rulers of Badami (see pp536–7), and date from the 6th–11th centuries.

Most visitors begin their tour of Aihole at the **Durga Temple**. Nearby is a small complex with the **Ladkhan Temple**. This building is recognizable by the tiers of sloping slabs that roof the spacious hall, as well as the adjoining entrance porch. River goddesses and amorous couples are carved on the columns of the porch, while images of deities can be seen on the side walls of a small chamber at the rooftop level. The adjacent **Gaudar Gudi** comprises a small sanctuary set within an open *mandapa*, with balcony seating on four sides. The ruined Chakra Gudi is near the stepped tank. The **Kuntl Group**, a quartet of

temples conceived as open columned halls with interior sanctuaries, lies to the south. The temple to the southeast, probably the first to be built, has superbly carved ceiling panels portraying the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. A similar trio of ceiling panels can be seen in the Hucchapayya Math, lying a short distance beyond.

A stepped path leads to the top of the hill, southeast of the town, passing by a two-storied Buddhist temple. At the summit of the hill stands the serene **Meguti Temple**, built in AD 634, the earliest dated structural monument in Karnataka. The temple's clearly articulated basement, plastered walls and eaves show the South Indian style of temple architecture (see p20) in its earliest phase. An impressive seated Jain figure is installed in the sanctuary. Prehistoric megalithic tombs are located to the rear of the

temple. The road, going downhill, follows the curving fortifications and passes the Jyotiranga Group, until it ends at the Durga Temple. To the north of the Durga Temple is the **Chikki Gudi**, with exquisitely carved columns, beams and ceiling panels. A path to the right leads to the small **Hucchimali Gudi**, with a North Indian style tower, and an unusual icon of Karttikeya, Shiva's son, carved on the ceiling of the front porch.

Nearby lies the rock-cut **Ravala Phadi Cave**, dating to the late 6th century. Its interior is enhanced with splendid carvings of Hindu divinities. These include a Dancing Shiva in a shrine; Ardhanarishvara, Hanhara and Shiva with Ganga, on the walls of the main hall; and Varaha and Durga in the antechamber preceding the small linga sanctuary. Tiny shrines and a fluted column stand in front.



The exuberant Dancing Shiva relief in Ravala Phadi Cave

Aihole: Durga Temple



Medallion on porch pillar

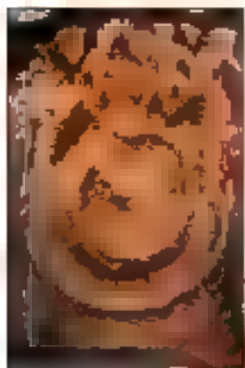
The largest and finest monument at Aihole, the Durga Temple is also the most unusual because of its apsidal sanctuary surrounded by an open colonnade. The temple is elevated on a lofty plinth, with steps at one end leading to a porch with elaborate carvings of sensuous couples and guardians on its columns. Other sculptural masterpieces, of Shiva with Nandi, Narasimha, Vishnu with Garuda, Durga and Hanhara, are placed in the niches lining the colonnade. The interior of the hall is plain by contrast and the circular plinth within the sanctuary empty. The temple's name is a misnomer, as the identity of the image that was once worshipped here remains unknown.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

N of Archaeological Museum. ☐ daily ☒ covers all main temples



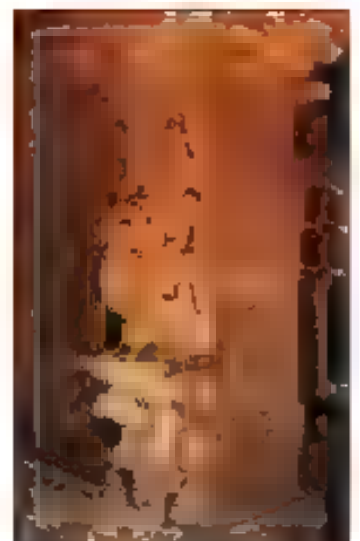
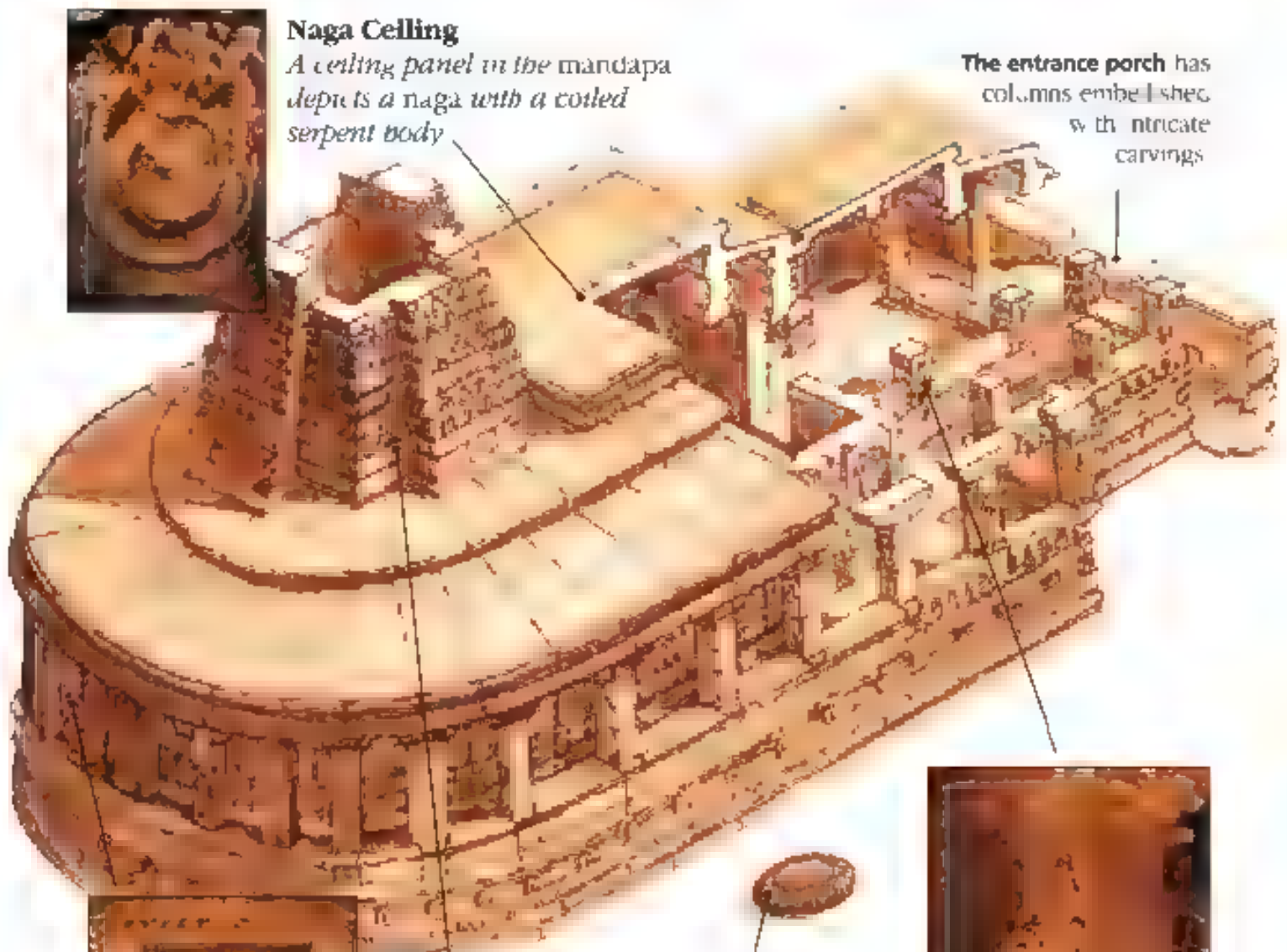
A view of the semi-circular sanctuary of the Durga Temple



Naga Ceiling

A ceiling panel in the mandapa depicts a naga with a coiled serpent body.

The entrance porch has columns embellished with intricate carvings.



Column Carving

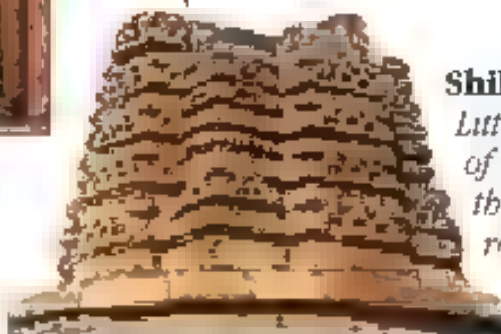
This depiction of an amorous couple, carved on one of the columns in the porch, is a masterpiece of Chalukyan art.



Durga

This niche shows a multi-armed Durga slaying the buffalo demon.

The capstone (amalaka), a ribbed disc, has fallen down from the tower.



Shikhara

Little remains of the tower that once rose above the inner sanctum.

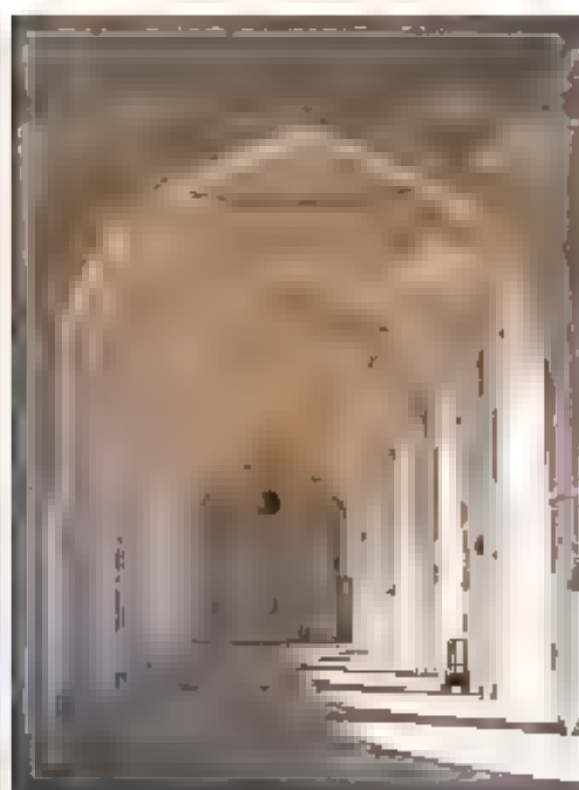
Bijapur ㉓

Bijapur district 570 km 354 miles)
NW of Bangalore ㉓ 246,000 ㉓
㉓ ㉓ Karnataka Tourism, Station
Rd, (08352) 250 359 ㉓ Bijapur
Music Festival (Jan). Asar Mahal Urs
Festival (Sep).

After the fall of the Bahmanis (see p544), the Adil Shahi sultans emerged as the principal rulers of the Deccan in the 16th and 17th centuries. Their capital, the fortified city of Bijapur, was protected by ramparts with prominent bastions, many of the original cannons are still in place. The Malik-i-Maidan ("Lord of the Plain"), reputedly the largest cannon of the period in India, still guards the western entrance. Within the fort's walls are splendid mosques, palaces and tombs built by a succession of enlightened rulers.

㉓ The Citadel

The Citadel, in the heart of the city, is defined by its own fortified walls and surrounded by a wide moat. The south gate, the only one surviving, leads into what was once the palace complex. This ceremonial centre of Bijapur, surrounded by arcades, is known as the **Quadrangle** and is today occupied by municipal offices. To its northwest stands the **Sat Manzil**, the seven-storeyed pleasure palace from the top of which the whole city could once be seen. Of this, only five storeys now remain. It overlooks an



The arcaded prayer hall of the Jami Masjid

exquisitely ornamented miniature pavilion called the **Jal Mandir**. A short distance to the north are the **Gagan Mahal**, the audience hall of Ali Adil Shah I, with an arched façade facing an open space, and the **Anand Mahal** or the "Palace of Joy" where the ladies of the seraglio lived. Other fine structures include the **Mecra Masjid**, a charming little mosque to the east of the Citadel, and **Karimuddin's Mosque** near the south gate, built with temple materials pillaged in 1310 by Alauddin Khilji (see p48).



Medallion at Jami Masjid

㉓ Outside the Citadel

The walled city, outside the Citadel, is scattered with monuments built by the Adil Shahi sultans. To the east of

the Citadel, is the double-storeyed **Asar Mahal**, built in 1646 as the hall of justice, and later converted into a sacred reliquary to house two hairs of the Prophet. Chambers on the upper level are decorated with murals depicting floral themes and courtly scenes with European-style figures. A short distance away is the elegant **Mihtar Mahal**, belonging to the period of Ibrahim II (1580–1626) and entered through a triple-

storeyed gateway. Balconies projecting over the street are supported on angled struts carved as if they were made of wood. The gateway leads to a small mosque.

The grandly conceived **Jami Masjid**, to the southeast, was begun by Ali Adil Shah I in 1576, but never finished. The marble floor of the capacious prayer hall has been divided into some 2,250 rectangular bays to resemble prayer mats. Even today, the mosque attracts more than 2,000 worshippers during Friday prayers. To the north and west are more tombs and mosques, including the **Taj Baoli**, a large square tank surrounded by steps.

㉓ Ibrahim Rauza

㉓ daily ㉓ extra charges. This exquisite mausoleum, often described as the finest Islamic building in the Deccan, was built by Ibrahim II for his wife. In fact, he predeceased her and is buried here too. The funerary complex consists of a tomb and a mosque, raised on a platform in the middle of a formal garden. A huge tank nearby is named after his wife, **Taj Sultana**. The walls of the tomb, as seen within an arcaded veranda, are embellished with superb calligraphic and geometric designs. The tomb chamber is roofed by a flat vault with curving sides.



Ibrahim Rauza, the beautifully proportioned tomb of Ibrahim II

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp711–12 and pp738–9

Bijapur: Gol Gumbad



Detail of a medallion

Bijapur's most celebrated building, the monumental tomb of Muhammad Adil Shah (1627–56), second son and successor of Ibrahim II. It is commonly known as the "Round Dome", or Gol Gumbad. The slightly bulbous dome, the largest in the world after St Peter's in Rome, rises on a base of petals to form a fitting climax to

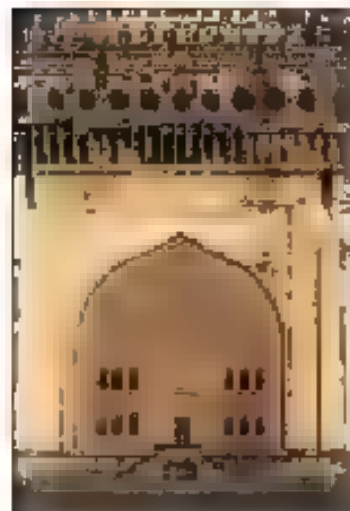
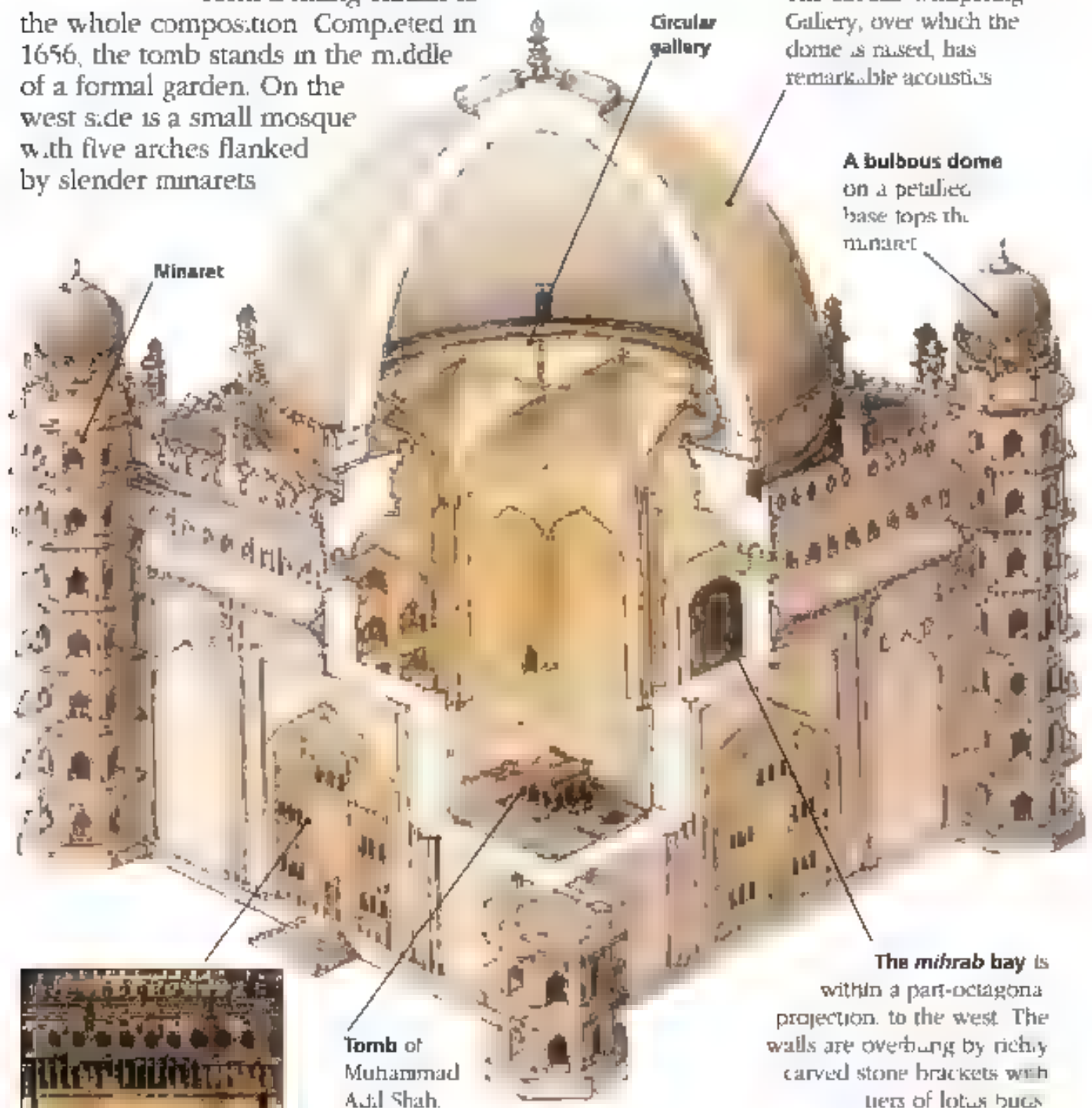
the whole composition. Completed in 1656, the tomb stands in the middle of a formal garden. On the west side is a small mosque with five arches flanked by slender minarets.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Mahatma Gandhi Rd. Tel (08352) 250 728 ☐ daily ☑ free on Fri.
Autos & cycles available.

The dome is nearly 44 m (133 ft) in diameter. It is carried on eight overlapping arches with intervening pendentives. The circular Whispering Gallery, over which the dome is raised, has remarkable acoustics.

A bulbous dome on a petal-like base tops the minaret.



Entrance Arch

The entrance façade has a wide, lofty arch in the centre, pierced with small windows on either side.

Tomb of Muhammad Adil Shah.

The mihrab bay is within a part-octagonal projection to the west. The walls are overhung by richly carved stone brackets with tiers of lotus buds.

DECCANI PAINTING

The Muslim rulers of the Deccan, especially of Golconda (see pp666–7) and Bijapur, during the 14th and 15th centuries, encouraged art and established a Deccani School of Painting. This was influenced first by direct contact with Central Asia and Persia, and later by the Mughals. At the court of Bijapur, elements of European Renaissance and Persian art were assimilated into the classical Indian tradition to create a distinctive Deccani style.



Chand Bibi Playing Polo, a Deccani painting



The vaulted hall of the Jami Masjid at Gulbarga

Gulbarga 25

Gulbarga district, 160 km (99 miles) NE of Bijapur. 428,000 Gulbarga Tourist Office, (08472) 240 947 Jrs (Mar)

This small provincial town contains some of the earliest examples of Islamic architecture in Karnataka. These date to the 14th and 15th centuries, when Gulbarga flourished as the capital of the Bahmani sultans (see p49) the first of the great Muslim kingdoms to dominate the Deccan.

The **Dargah of Gesu Daraz** (d 1422) to the northeast of the present town, is one of South India's holiest Muslim shrines. Khwaja Gesu Daraz or Bande Nawaz as he was

affectionately known, was a Sufi mystic from the Chishti sect (see p376). He fled from North India and sought refuge here at the court of Firuz Shah Bahmani, a pious and enlightened ruler. His simple tomb stands in the middle of a large, sprawling complex comprising a group of lesser tombs, mosques and *madrassas*, and is a major pilgrimage centre. The Dargah of Shah Kamal Mujaarrad, another saint who lived in Gulbarga, lies further south.

A complex of seven royal tombs, known as the **Haft Gumbad**, lies to the west of the *dargah*. Firuz Shah Bahmani, who also died in 1422, is buried here in the largest and most elaborate of all the mausoleums.

Immediately west of the city are the desolate ruins of the formidable fort, almost circular and protected by a wide moat. Little of the royal centre remains intact today. Near the entrance gateway is the Bala Hisar, a solid keep dating from the 17th century when the Adil Shahs (see pp542-3) occupied the city. The most interesting structure, however, is the large **Jami Masjid** nearby. Built in 1367 to commemorate Gulbarga's status as the capital, this is one of the earliest mosques in South India, and the only one without an open courtyard. To its

rear is the 14th-century Bazaar Street, lined with small chambers now converted into dwellings. This leads to a series of gateways shielded by walls that protrude outwards from the fort walls. To the west of the fort are the derelict tombs of the early Bahmani sultans.

Another 14th-century monument is the **Shah Bazaar Mosque** to the north of the fort. Its domed entrance chamber leads into a courtyard with a prayer hall beyond. A street from here proceeds westwards to an arcaded portal flanked by lofty minarets. Behind this portal lies the Dargah of Sheikh Sirajuddin Junaydi, a simple tomb with arcaded recesses and a flat sh dome.

Environs

The picturesque ruins of **Firuzabad**, the palace city founded in 1400 by Firuz Shah Bahmani on the east bank of the Bhima river, are located 28 km (17 miles) south of Gulbarga. The massive stone walls with quadrangular bastions and arched gateways define an approximately square zone, almost 1,300 m (3,281 ft) wide. The best preserved structures are the Jami Masjid and a two-storeyed audience hall. Among the remains are the royal baths (*hamams*), with pyramids, vaults and fluted domes, said to be the oldest in the Deccan.

Bidar 26

Bidar district, 120 km (75 miles) NE of Gulbarga. Autos & cycles available

Bidar became the Bahmani capital in 1421, when Firuz Shah's brother and successor Ahmad Shah moved his court here. With the collapse of the Bahmani dynasty at the end of the 15th century, control of the region passed into the hands of the Bandis.

Bidar's **Fort**, built in 1428 by Ahmed Shah Bahmani, occupies a promontory that is defended by double rings of walls and a moat, partly carved out of the bedrock. A trio of arched gates, one with polychrome tilework, another with



Devotees at the gateway to the Dargah of Gesu Daraz, Gulbarga



The walled road leading to the entrance gateway of Bidar's fort

a prominent dome, leads into what was once the royal enclave. To the left is the **Rangin Mahal**, an exquisite palace built by Ali Shah Barid in the 16th century. The hall, with its original wooden columns displaying ornate brackets and beams, and the rear chamber adorned with magnificent tile mosaics and inlaid mother-of-pearl decoration, are especially striking. Nearby is the unusual **Solah Khamba**

Mosque, with massive circular columns, built by the Tughluqs (see p48) in 1327. In front is the Lal Bagh, a walled garden with a central lobe-fringed pool. A short distance to the south is the ruined **Dawan-i-Am**, the Public Audience Hall, and the **Takht Mahal**, a monumental portal with traces of hexagonal tiles decorated with tiger and sun emblems in the spandrels.

The old walled town sprawls beneath the ramparts of the fort. On one side of the main north-south street is the **Takhti-i-Kirmanli**, a 13th-century gateway embellished with bands of foliate and arabesque designs. Further south is the magnificent late 15th-century **Madrasa of Mahmud Gawan**, named after the erudite prime minister who was the virtual ruler of the Bahmani kingdom. This used to be a famous theological college, and at one time boasted a huge library, well-stocked with scholarly

manuscripts. A superb example of Central Asian-style architecture, it has four arched portals that stand against a background of domes facing a central court. A pair of minarets flanks its façade. Tile mosaics on the exterior still survive, including a finely



The mosaic at Bidar's madrasa

worked calligraphic band in rich blue and white. Still further south, the **Chaubara** marks the intersection of the two principal streets running through Bidar.

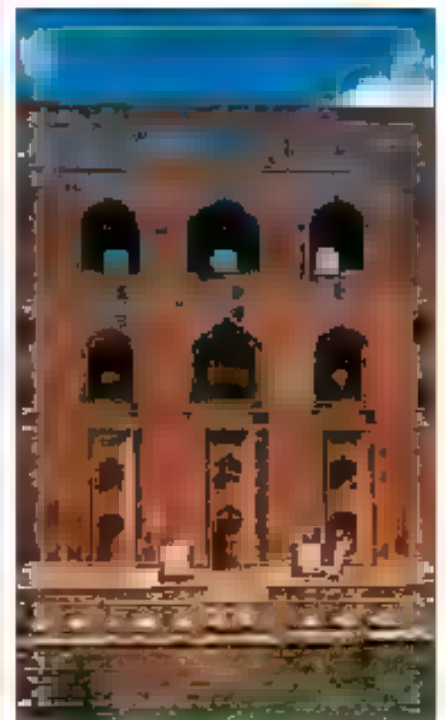
The **Mausolea of the Baridi rulers** lie west of Bidar. The largest is the Tomb of Ali Shah Barid (1577). This lofty, domed chamber, open on four sides, stands in the middle of a symmetrical four-square garden. Blank panels above the arches once contained tile mosaic, examples of which are preserved inside. The black polished basalt sarcophagus is still *in situ*.

Bidar is also known for a special type of encrusted metalware, often mistaken for damascening, known as *bidri* (see p66). Introduced in the mid-17th century by artisans from Iran, the craft flourished under court patronage. The style, characterized by intricate floral and geometric designs, inlaid in gold, silver or brass onto a matt black surface, was used to embellish various objects, including platters, boxes, *bugga* bases and trays. Today, the finest

pieces are housed in museums, and only a handful of artisan families still practise this craft in the town of its origin.

Environs

The **Banmani** necropolis stands in the open countryside near **Ashtur**, a small village 3 km (2 miles) northeast of Bidar. The oldest and grandest of the tombs is the early 15th-century Tomb of Ahmad Shah. Splendid murals embellish the interior walls as well as the huge dome. The adjacent tomb of Alauddin Ahmad II, his successor, has coloured tile mosaics. Just outside is the **Chaukhandi**, the modest tomb of the saint Khali Afah (d 1460), which has superb calligraphic panels over the doorways.



Facade of the Madrasa of Mahmud Gawan in Bidar





SOUTH INDIA



INTRODUCING SOUTH INDIA 548 555

CHENNAI 556 575

TAMIL NADU 576-615

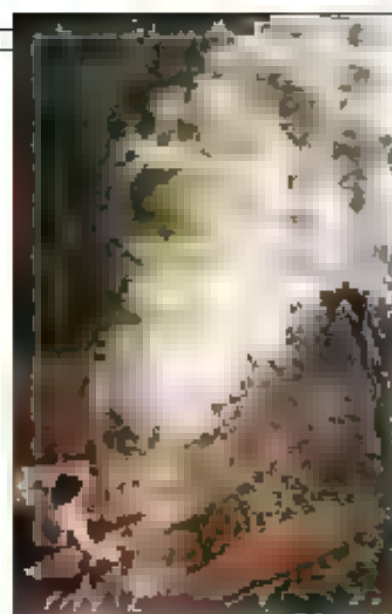
ANDAMAN ISLANDS 616-623

KERALA 624 657

ANDHRA PRADESH 658 683

Introducing South India

South of the Vindhya range, India's Dravidian heartland has all that a visitor could look for. Dramatic coastlines, both on the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, meet at Kanniyakumari on the Indian Ocean. Isolated beaches, dense forests and game reserves are among its natural wonders. Tamil Nadu has some of India's most magnificent ancient temples, still active centres of religious practice. A different culture prevails in Pondicherry, which retains a strong French influence. Kerala is rich in beautiful scenery as well as in cultural heritage while Andhra Pradesh has some of the region's most fascinating historic sites.



Fisherman at a sluice gate on the Kaveri river

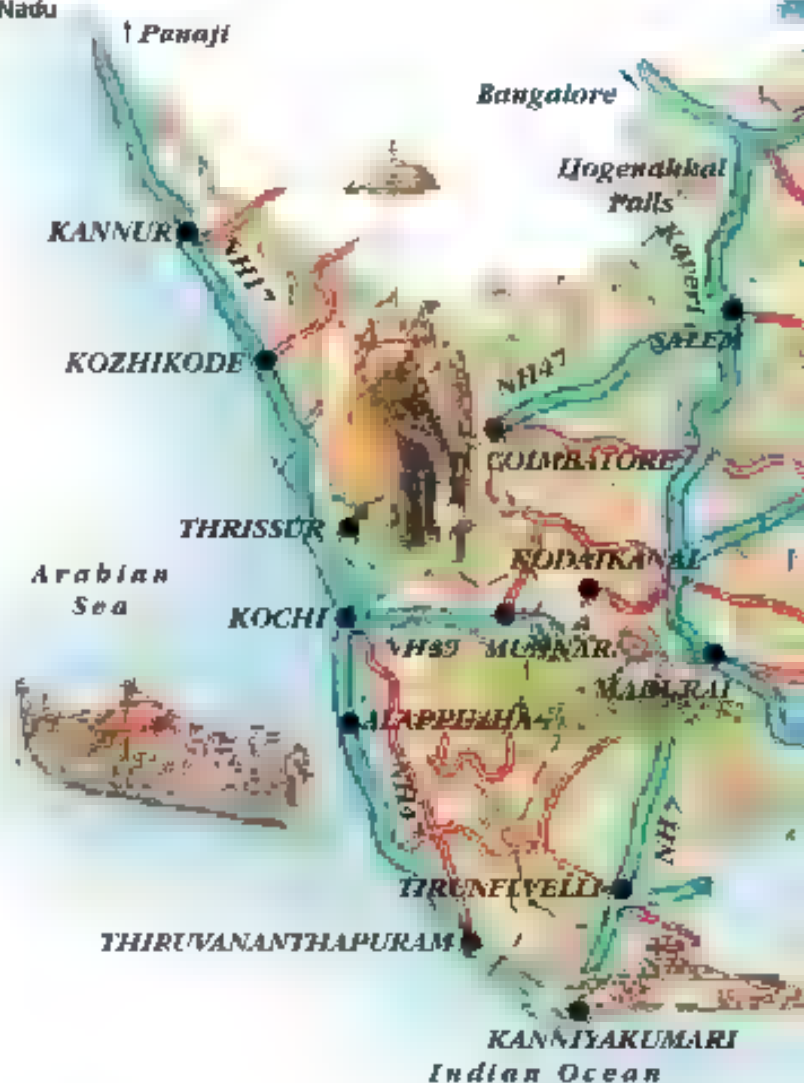


A class in progress in a traditional Vedic school, Tamil Nadu

LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS



0 km 100
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ANDAMAN ISLANDS



GETTING AROUND

The three state capitals, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram and Hyderabad are serviced by domestic and international airlines. The extensive road and railway network connects the smaller towns. For a special rail journey, take the Blue Mountain Train from Coimbatore to Ooty (see pp 604-605). There are regular flights from Kolkata and Chennai to the Andaman Islands, and from Kochi (Kerala) to Agatti (Lakshadweep). Cruises to Lakshadweep are available from Kochi, and to the Andamans from Chennai, Kolkata and Visakhapatnam.

A PORTRAIT OF SOUTH INDIA

The term "South India", though it conveys a sense of geographical unity, also encompasses a multitude of differences. While the three states – Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh – share, to some extent, an ancient heritage, they speak different languages, and each has its distinct artistic, cultural and political tradition.

A popular view holds that while the history of North India is one of wars and invasions, the south remained cocooned in peaceful stagnation. In actual fact, the three states witnessed bloody conflicts between Jainism and Buddhism on the one hand, and Brahminical Hinduism on the other. They saw the rise and fall of powerful kingdoms, who fought many wars to establish their dominance. In the beginning of the colonial period, South India was also a battleground between the Europeans and the regional kingdoms. All these upheavals have left their mark on the region.

Tamil Nadu, the heartland of Dravidian India has, for over three decades, been ruled by two regional



Wooden effigy,
Thiruvananthapuram

parties. Though arch rivals, they share a common platform, based on a strong advocacy of Tamil language and culture. Tamil is the oldest surviving Dravidian language, with a literature that goes back to AD 300. This period, known as the Sangam era, derives its name from the Tamil Sangams, gatherings of poets and writers, which produced countless poems, remarkably secular in nature, of which over 2,000 have survived. Another enduring expression of Tamil culture is visible in Tamil Nadu's Hindu temples – it has no less than 30,000 of them.

A more modern face of Tamil Nadu can be seen in the state capital, Chennai, a vibrant commercial and



A 16th-century Catholic church, overlooking a little fishing village at Kanniyakumari



A portrait of film star-turned-politician Jayalalitha

political centre that still retains its traditional values. Here, classical Carnatic music concerts draw as large and enthusiastic crowds as raucous political rallies. Many coastal areas in Tamil Nadu were devastated by the December 2004 tsunami, which took a toll of over 10,000 lives. Kerala and Andhra Pradesh were also affected, though to a much lesser extent.

In Kerala, separated from Tamil Nadu by the magnificent forested hills of the Western Ghats, the main attraction is not temples (though it has those too), but natural beauty. It is easy to understand why this narrow strip of land between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats, with its verdant landscape of palm trees, paddy fields and coffee plantations, criss-crossed by enchanting waterways, has been dubbed "God's own country".

Modern-day Kerala, with a strong leftist political tradition, boasts of development indices that are

exceptional among Indian states – the country's highest literacy rate (the language spoken here is Malayalam), a low population growth rate, the lowest infant mortality rate, and a near-perfect record in communal harmony. Culturally, Kerala boasts spectacular dance forms such as Kathakali (see p657), and the martial *kalaripayattu* (see p626). Today, its renowned Ayurvedic health resorts (see p629) are also a major draw for international travellers.

Telugu-speaking Andhra Pradesh is South India's largest state, with its capital, Hyderabad, located in the heart of the Deccan Plateau. This city was once the seat of the powerful Nizams (see p660) whose wealth was legendary. Their legacy has given Hyderabad a unique flavour, rich in manifestations of an Islamic culture – in its architecture and cuisine, and in the widespread use of Urdu.



A truck overloaded with hay

Andhra Pradesh shares with Tamil Nadu a penchant for film stars-turned-politicians. For many years it was ruled by Telugu cinema's most loved actor NT Rama Rao, who specialized in playing mythological heroes. His son-in-law, Chandrababu Naidu, as chief minister, chose a more down-to-earth way of winning popular support, with his schemes to modernize the state. As a result, Hyderabad now vies with Bangalore for the title of India's information technology capital.



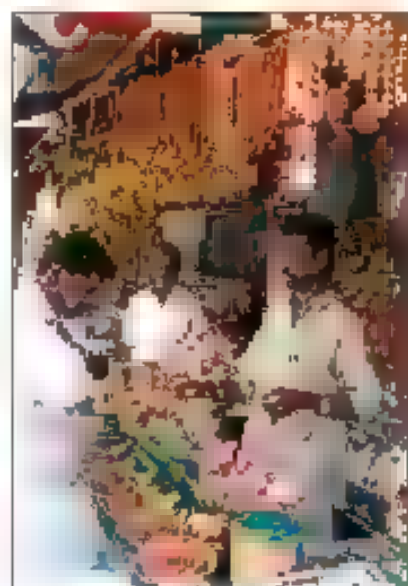
Tamil Brahmin boys performing a religious ritual

Temple Towns



Religious symbol

Srirangam (see p601) is typical of many towns in South India, especially in Tamil Nadu, that are dominated by sanctuaries dedicated to Hindu deities who protect the city and its population. Conceived as a vast religious complex, the town is enclosed by high fortress-like walls, and entered through towering gateways (*gopuras*). The temple itself consists of multiple walled enclosures, often in concentric arrangements, surrounded by streets that echo the temple's layout. Though Srirangam is the largest and most perfect in layout, other such towns include Chidambaram (see p590) and Madurai (see pp608-11).



Puja items being sold outside the temple enclosure



Kalyana Mandapas (marriage halls) have raised platforms in the middle. Portable images of the deities are placed here during the ritual marriage ceremonies and festivals that are conducted annually, in the presence of thousands of devotees.

Kitchens produce food for priests and thousands of pilgrims during festivals that take place in the complex. Nearby are stores and granaries.

Subsidiary shrines of other deities, such as *Garuda* and *Hanuman* in Vishnu temples, and *Ganesha*, *Nandi* and *Subrahmanya* or *Murugan* in Shiva temples, are also venerated within the complex.

Banners are hoisted on slender, brass-clad wooden columns in the middle of the enclosure. Here, too, are small altars.

The outer enclosures of temple complexes are packed with houses to accommodate the priestly community which presides over the religious life of temple towns.



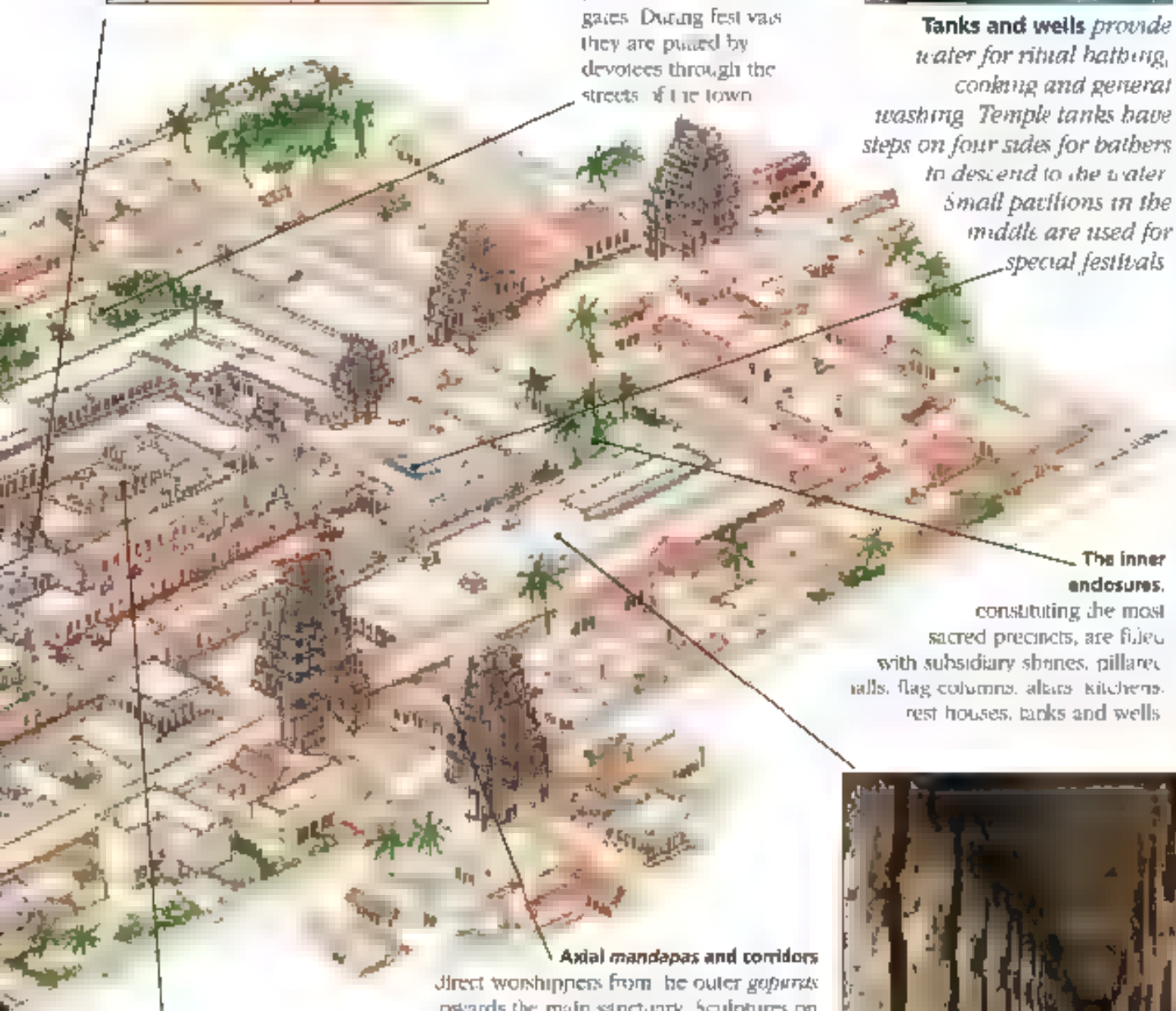


The main sanctum, where the principal deity is enshrined, forms the nucleus of the whole complex. This is the garbhagriha, or womb chamber. The main doorway into the sanctuary is opened only during prayer time to allow worshippers to make offerings to the deity within.

Wooden chariots covered with carved panels are parked outside the main gates. During festivals they are pulled by devotees through the streets of the town.



Tanks and wells provide water for ritual bathing, cooking and general washing. Temple tanks have steps on four sides for bathers to descend to the water. Small pavilions in the middle are used for special festivals.



The inner enclosures, constituting the most sacred precincts, are filled with subsidiary shrines, pillars, walls, flag columns, altars, kitchens, rest houses, tanks and wells.

Axial mandapas and corridors direct worshippers from the outer gopuras towards the main sanctuary. Sculptures on columns embellish these passageways. Bronze images are also displayed here.



Mandapas are columned halls which sometimes take on vast proportions, especially the so-called thousand-pillared halls. These can accommodate large numbers of visitors who come to listen to sermons or to enjoy performances of classical music and dance.



Gopuras, or ceremonial gateways, with soaring, pyramidal towers, are set into four sides of each of the concentric sets of walls that define the sacred complex. Their hollow brick towers are covered with brightly painted plaster sculptures. Barrel vaulted roofs at the tops of the towers are crowned by gilded pot finials, visible from all over the town.

The Flavours of South India

Rice preparations dominate South Indian cuisine, of which the best known are *dosas* (rice pancakes served with spiced potatoes), *idli* (steamed rice dumplings), *vada* (deep-fried lentil doughnuts) and *uttapam* (a spicy pancake). All are eaten with *sambhar* (lentil broth) and chutneys made with coconut, garlic and chillies. These are "tiffin" or breakfast foods, and specialist restaurants can be found all over India and abroad. Despite the commonalities, each state's cuisine has its own flavour dictated by regional tastes and locally grown ingredients, as is evident in Hyderabad's sophisticated Muslim cuisine.



Sprig of curry leaves



Fresh green coconuts, providing a refreshing drink on a hot day

The different communities have distinctive cuisines. The Hindus specialize in vegetarian food, while the Muslims and Christians excel in mutton and poultry dishes. Foreign influences are apparent and the classic *molee*, a term used for fish or vegetable curries, is a corruption of the Portuguese *molho* or sauce.

The staple food is rice and the best-known dish is the *appam*, a steamed rice pancake. A typical middle-

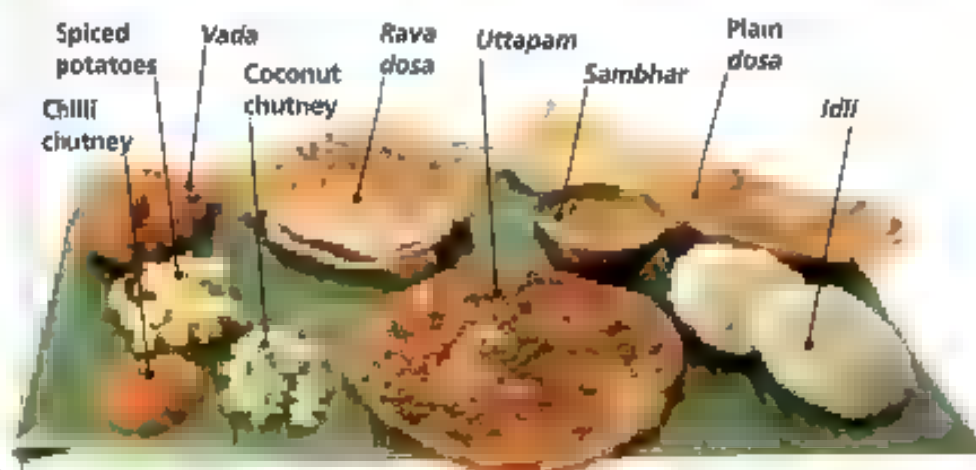
class meal comprises boiled rice accompanied by pulses, a vegetable curry, a dry vegetable, pickles, poppadams, and a meat or fish dish for non-vegetarians. The *sadya*, a festive meal eaten at Onam, is always served on a banana leaf.

TAMIL NADU

Six tastes – sweet, sour, salty, bitter, peppery and astringent – define Tamilian food. A traditional meal includes

KERALA

Kerala, the land of spices, particularly pepper, inspired the European race for an empire in the East. An abundance of spices, such as cloves, mace, cardamoms and cinnamon, have infused the cuisine with a range of exotic aromas. Added to this are coconuts, used in the preparation of a most all dishes.



Selection of South Indian rice preparations and other accompaniments

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES



Coconuts

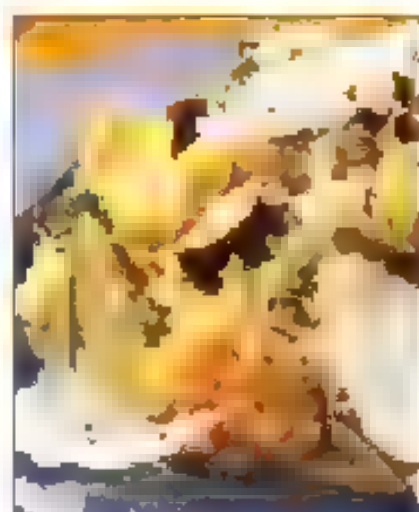
The common culinary heritage leans heavily on rice, lentils, coconut and spices. Vegetable preparations are diverse and range from the steamed or stir-fried *poriyal*,

which is tempered with spices and curry leaves, to *arial* (mixed vegetables in thick coconut sauce) and *mirchi ka salan*,

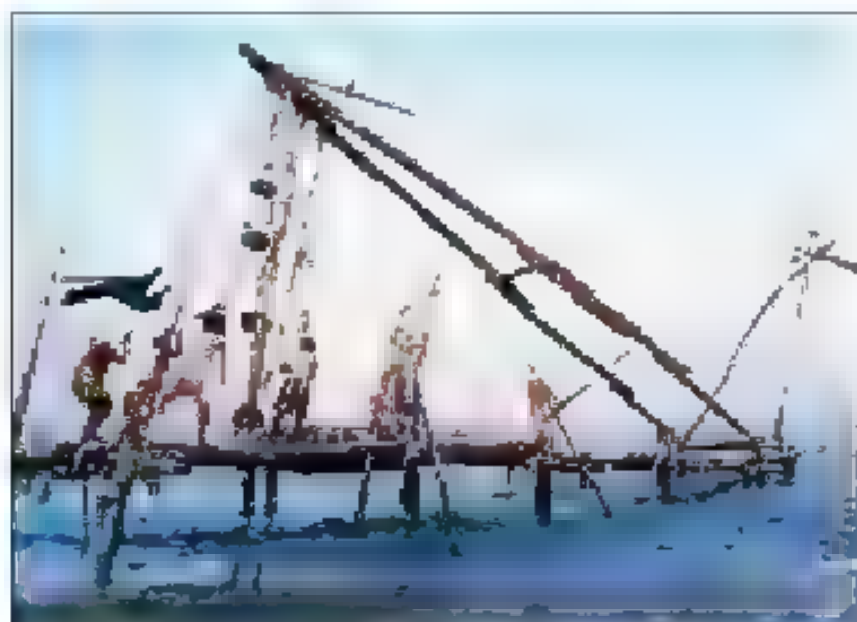
a curry with whole green chilies.

Interestingly, the word *curry* is a derivative of *kari*, a spicy dish from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, while *rasam*, integral

to a meal as an appetizer and digestive, was the base of the Anglo-Indian *maligatawny* soup. Chicken, lamb and fish also feature on the menu, particularly the seafood curries from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh and the delicious *biryans* and wide range of *kebabs* from Hyderabad.



Appams and stew – a popular dish consists of fermented rice dumplings served with a vegetable or chicken stew.



Chinese fishing nets, an iconic sight in Fort Cochin, Kerala

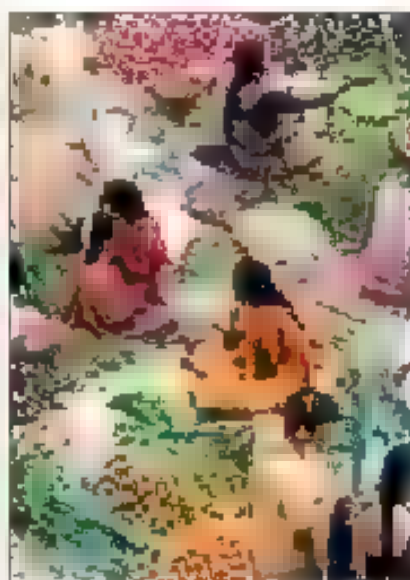
and six to balance nutrition, the appetite and digestion. The special flavour of the food comes from a combination of curry leaves, ginger, coconut, garlic, coriander, asafoetida, tamarind, pepper, chillies, cloves, cumin, cinnamon and cardamom.

Meals consist of cooked rice served with an array of vegetable dishes, *sambhar rasam* (pepper water) and chutneys. Crisp poppadams or *appalam* (rice wafer) complete a meal. Desserts include the warm milky rice *payasam* or sweet *pongal*, also made from rice.

Non-Brahmin communities, such as the Chettians from Chettinad, are meat eaters. Their hot and spicy cuisine has several interesting fish, mutton and chicken dishes of which pepper chicken is considered the best.

ANDHRA PRADESH

The liberal use of red chilli and tamarind make Andhra food one of the country's spiciest. Rice and vegetables form the basis of a meal. Some common dishes



View of a street vegetable market in rural Tamil Nadu

include *pulthora* (a vegetable pulao), *pesarattu* (a variation of the *dosa*), *dhapalam* (a vegetable curry) and *pachadi* (a curd-based relish).

In contrast is the cuisine of Hyderabad with its distinct Muslim influences. Savoury mutton or chicken *biryani*s are accompanied by *kebabs*, and chicken or vegetable curries (*salans*), vegetables and breads. Some specialities include *pathar gosht* (lamb cooked on a stone), *haleem* (a pounded wheat and lamb dish eaten during the fasting months of *Ramzan* or *Ramadan*) and desserts such as *shahi tukra* and *kubhar ka meetha*, made with dried apricots and cream.

ON THE MENU

Aadu olathiyathu Fried cubes of lamb garnished with coconut and curry leaves.

Meen varuval *Masala* fried fish from Chettinad served with sliced onions and lime.

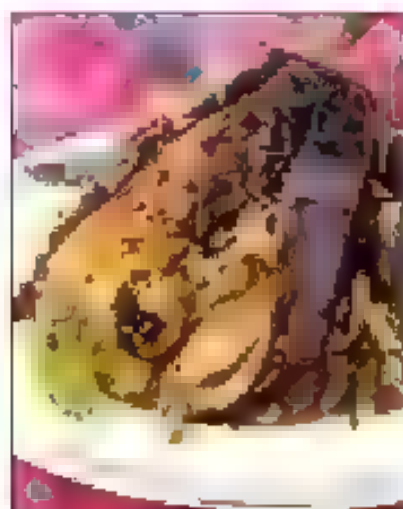
Sambhar A spicy lentil broth with mixed vegetables, a must for all meals.

Tahari A rice and mincemeat *pulao*, a Hyderabad special.

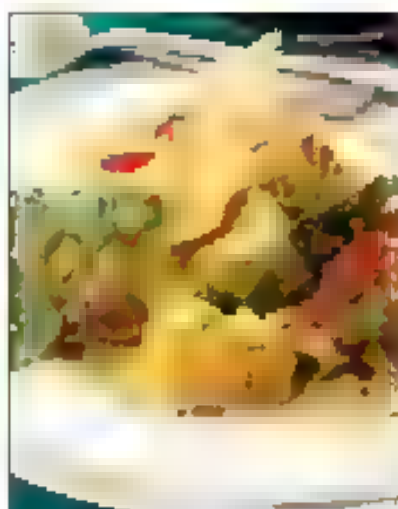
Tamatar pappu A spicy tomato and lentil curry.

Thengai saadham Coconut rice seasoned with red chillies and curry leaves.

Upma A savoury semolina breakfast dish.



Bagharey baingan Whole aubergines stuffed with spices are Hyderabad's most famous vegetarian dish.



Meen moilee A speciality of the Christian community of Kerala, this is a mildly spiced coconut fish curry.



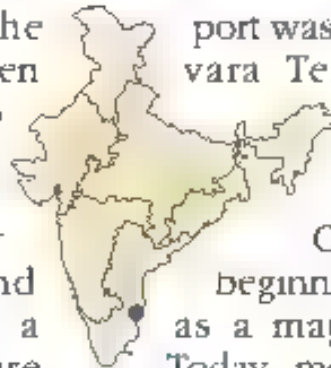
Pasayam is a creamy dessert made from rice and milk and garnished with cashew nuts and raisins.



CHENNAI

Chennai, formerly known as Madras, is the state capital of Tamil Nadu and the gateway to the rich and varied culture of the South Indian peninsula. Originally a cluster of fishing hamlets along the Coromandel Coast, the city developed its cohesive shape under the British. Today, it is South India's commercial and cultural capital, and the fourth largest metropolis in India.

A modern capital, with the appearance of a gracious garden city, Chennai was once a group of villages set amidst palm-fringed paddy fields, until two English East India Company merchants, Francis Day and Andrew Cogan, established a factory-cum-trading post here. Completed on St George's Day, 23 April 1640, this fortified settlement came to be known as Fort St George. Outside its walls was George Town, the so-called "native town", whose crowded lanes, each devoted to a particular trade, serviced the British colonists. Colonial rule linked the various villages, including the settlement founded in the 16th century by the Portuguese at San Thomé, the sacred site associated with St Thomas the Apostle. Several centuries before the Europeans arrived, the great 7th-century Pallava



port was at Mylapore, its Kapalesvara Temple, along with the Parthasarathi Temple at Triplicane, bear testimony to the city's antiquity. Colonial rule marked the beginning of the city's growth as a major commercial centre. Today, most of the large business houses have their offices in George Town, while Fort St George is the power centre of the Tamil Nadu state government. Extending across 172 sq km (66 sq miles), Chennai today is a dynamic mix of the old and the new, its stately colonial structures juxtaposed with modern high-rises. Its rich cultural heritage of Tamil literature, music and dance is perpetuated in universities and performing arts centres. It is also a highly political city, as can be seen from the many grandiose memorials to politicians that line Marina Beach.



A huge hoarding depicting Jayalalitha, a Tamil Nadu political leader, looming above Marina promenade

Exploring Chennai

A conglomeration of several overgrown villages, Chennai has no single centre but can be divided into a number of urban districts, connected by four main roads. George Town is to the northeast of Periyar EVR High Road (Poonamallee High Road), while Egmore, Triplicane and Mylapore are to the south. The city's main thoroughfare, Anna Salai (Mount Road) links Fort St George with Mount St Thomas to the south. Chennai's other main roads, Rajaji Salai (North Beach Road) and Kamarajar Salai (South Beach Road), run along the seafront, along the popular Marina promenade towards Kalakshetra.



An early morning scene at a flower shop at Parry's Corner

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Historic Buildings, Areas & Neighbourhoods

- Adyar ⑩
- Anna Salai ⑩
- Egmore ④
- Fort St George ①
- George Town ④
- Triplicane ③

Churches & Holy Places

- Little Mount & Mount of St Thomas ⑩
- Mylapore & San Thomé ⑨
- St Andrew's Kirk pp562-3 ①

Walk

- A Walk along the Marina pp568-9 ③

Museums

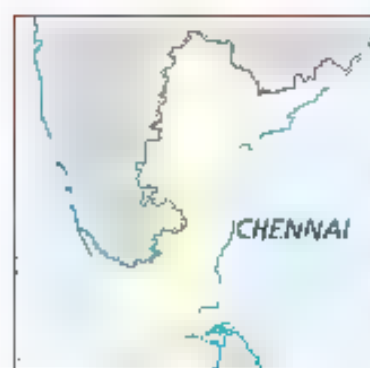
- The Pantheon Complex ⑤

Parks & Gardens

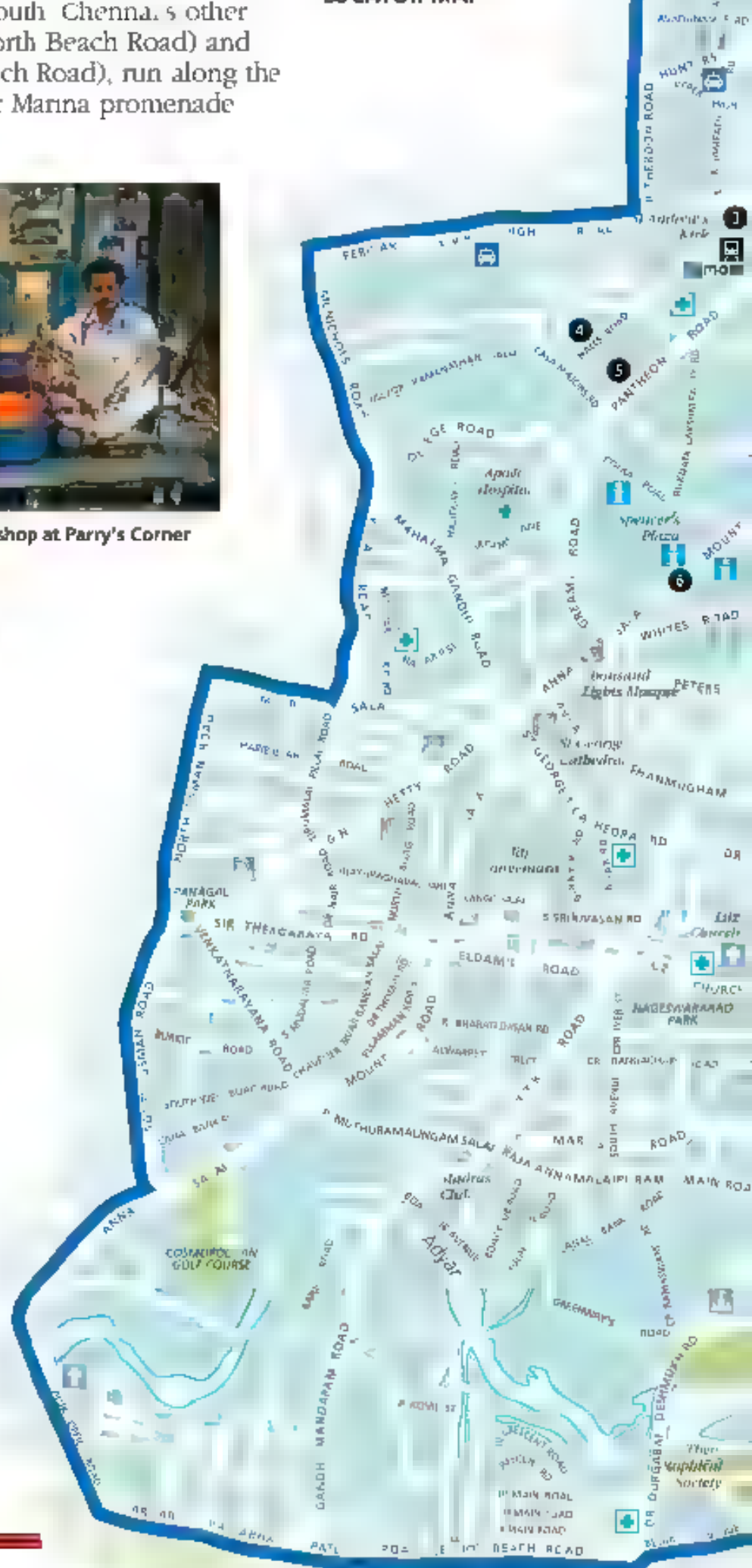
- Guindy National Park ⑪

Entertainment

- Kalakshetra ⑪
- MGR Film City ⑫



LOCATOR MAP



GETTING AROUND

Public buses and private cars or taxis are the most convenient means of getting around within the city. The local (above-ground) trains of Chennai's Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) and the suburban railway together cover large sections of the city and its outskirts. Private tour operators have organized coach tours to most sites of interest.

SEE ALSO

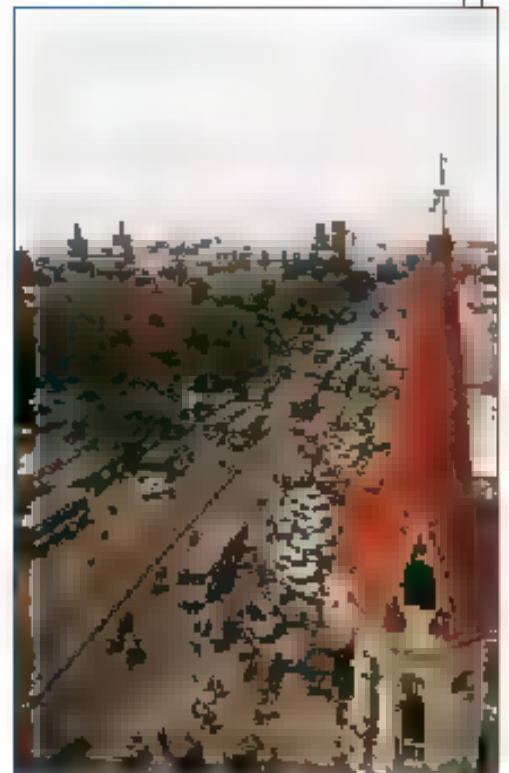
- *Where to Stay* pp 712-13
- *Where to Eat* pp 39-40



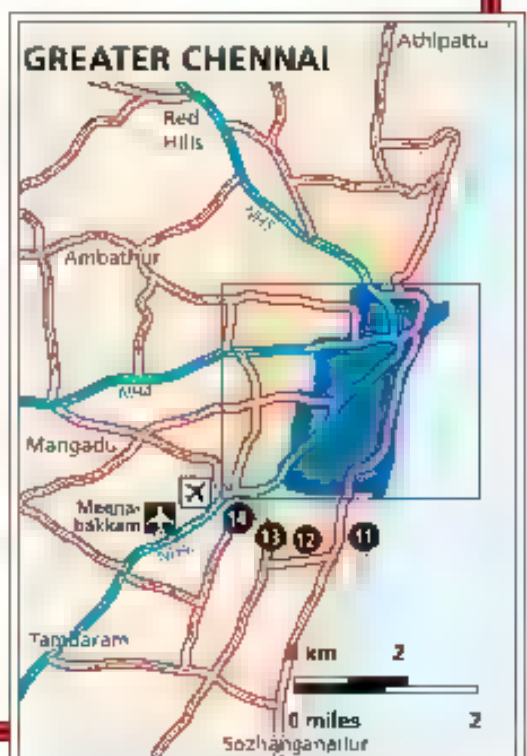
KEY

- ✈ International airport
- ✈ Domestic airport
- 🚉 Railway station
- 🚌 Bus station
- M MRTS station
- i Tourist information
- H Hospital
- 👮 Police station
- 🏛 Temple
- 🕌 Mosque
- 🏯 Gurdwara
- 🏰 Church
- ✉ Post office
- 🛣 National highway
- 🛣 Major road

0 km 1
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Traffic on Anna Salai, Chennai's main thoroughfare





The Secretariat at Fort St George, the seat of Tamil Nadu's government

Fort St George ①

Bounded by Sir Muthuswamy Iyer Rd, Flag Staff Rd & Kamarajar Sala (South Beach Rd) **Fort Museum**
Tel (044, 2538 4510) ☐ Sat–Thu
● public hols. 📷

Britain's first bastion in India, the nucleus from which an empire grew, was established in a banana grove owned by a farmer called Madrasan. The official grant for the land, however, was given by Venkatadri Nayak, the deputy of the Raja of Chandragiri (see p680). The first factory within the fortified enclosure was completed on St George's Day, 23 April 1640, and named Fort St George. This was the East India Company's principal settlement until 1774, when Calcutta (now Kolkata) was declared the seat of the government.

The sloping ramparts, with battlements for gun emplacement that can still be seen today, were designed and constructed by Bartholomew Robins in 1750, after the

original walls were destroyed by the French army in 1749. These ramparts form an irregular pentagon, further reinforced by a ring of earthen walls that slope down to a moat surrounding the entire complex. The drawbridges that once led to the Fort's five main gates have now been replaced by roads.

The first building to be seen on entering the Fort through the Sea Gate is the Neo-Classical **Secretariat**, which is today the seat of the government of Tamil Nadu. Behind it lie the **Legislative Council Chambers**. With their handsome classical lines and façades embellished with gleaming black pillars, these impressive buildings, built between 1694 and 1732, are said to be among the oldest surviving British constructions in India. The 45-m (148-ft) tall

flagstaff was erected by Governor Elihu Yale in 1687 to hoist the Union Jack for the first time in India. Today, the Indian tricolour flies in its stead. Yale began his career as a clerk with the East India Company and later founded Yale University in the USA, with his considerable fortune.

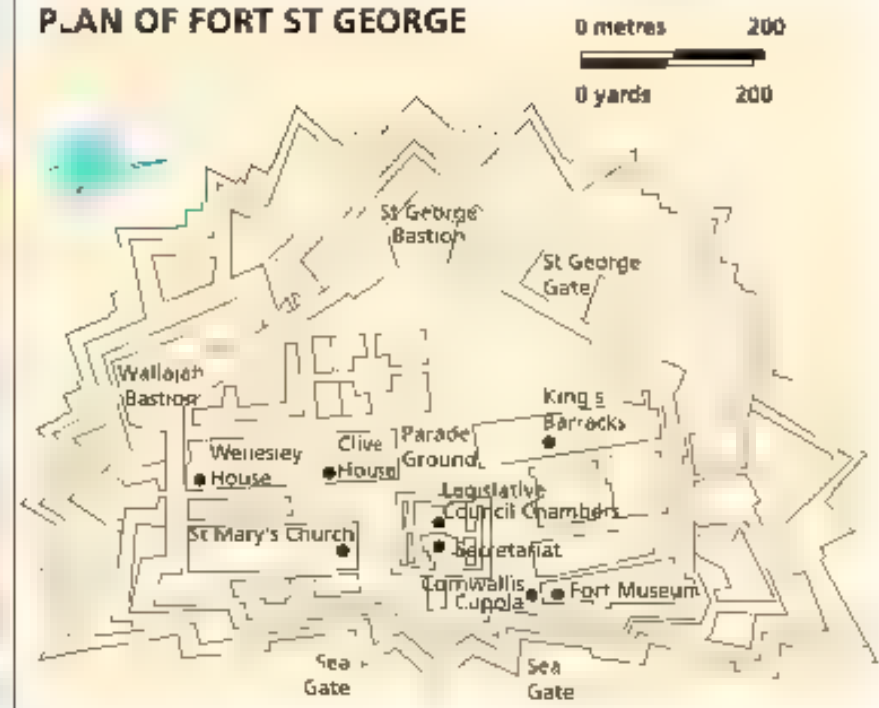
Standing to the south of the Legislature building is **St Mary's Church**, the oldest Anglican church in Asia. It was built between 1678 and 1680 by Streynsham Master, then the governor of Madras. Memorials, paintings, antique Bibles (including one printed in 1660) and silver are displayed in the church, and speak of its vibrant history. Both Elihu Yale and Robert Clive were married in this church, and the three daughters of Job Charnock (see p267) were baptized here before the family moved to Bengal. Arthur Wellesley, who later became the Duke of Wellington and triumphed at Waterloo, and Robert Clive both lived in Fort St George. Their residences, Wellesley House and Clive House, still stand, albeit in a somewhat dilapidated condition, across from the church.

To the north is the **Parade Ground**, formerly Cornwallis Square, which was laid out in 1715. Magnificent parades and rallies were held here. To its east are ministerial offices and barracks for regiments. Near the south-east corner of



The altar in St Mary's Church with a painting of the Last Supper

PLAN OF FORT ST GEORGE



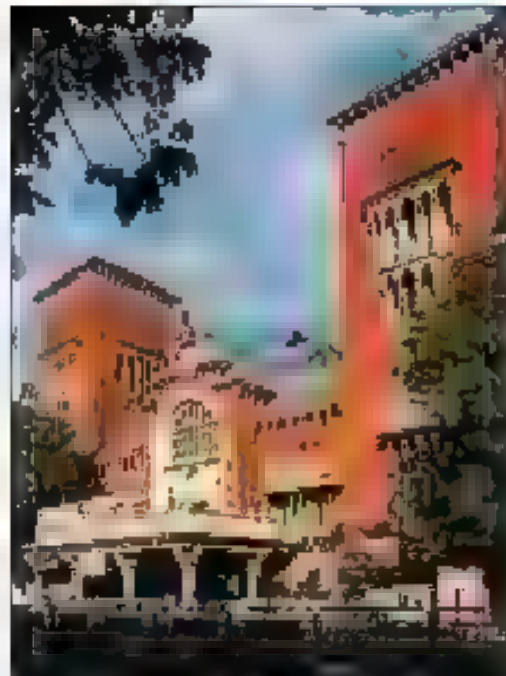
the Parade Ground is the **Fort Museum**, built in the 1780s. A treasure trove of colonial memorabilia, the museum is housed in what was built to be the Public Exchange. It has paintings of British royalty, 18th-century weaponry, emblems and other relics from the British era. Among its prized possessions are a scale model of the Fort and a painting of King George III and Queen Charlotte. There are lithographs on the second and third floors that provide fascinating perspectives of old Madras and other parts of South India.

Near the museum's southern end, and overlooking its cannon, is the **Cornwallis Cupola**, which originally stood in the Parade Ground. It is the largest one built to house the statue of the governor-general, Lord Cornwallis, sculpted in 1800. It shows him accepting the two young sons of Tipu Sultan (*see p517*) as hostages.

George Town ②

Bounded by Rajaji Salai (North Beach Rd) & NSC Bose Rd

In the 1640s, weavers and dyers from Andhra Pradesh were settled in this enclave to manufacture cloth for the East India Company's textile trade. The British referred to the settlement as "Black Town"



The General Post Office, George Town

while its inhabitants called it Chennapatnam, from where Chennai gets its name. After the entire area was rebuilt 10 years later, it was renamed George Town. During this period, most of the city's commercial activity was concentrated within this 5-sq. km (2-sq. mile) area. It still remains a busy hive of activity with public institutions in the south, trade and commercial premises in the centre, and residential quarters in the north.

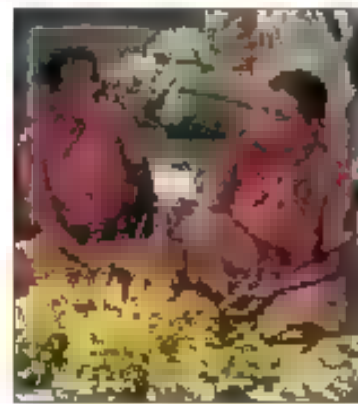
The first feature of interest is the 38-m (125-ft) high

Lighthouse on Rajaji Salai, whose beacon was visible 25 km (16 miles) out at sea. The adjacent red-brick **High Court**, designed by Chisholm in the Indo-Saracenic style, with stained glass and carved furniture, was opened in 1892, while the nearby **General Post Office** with its archways and square towers, is another fine Indo-Saracenic building.

Parry's Corner, at the junction of NSC Bose Road and Rajaji Salai, is named after Parry and Company. Founded by Thomas Parry in 1790, it

is the oldest British mercantile company still operating in Chennai. **Dare House**, the present headquarters of this 200-year-old company, now stands at the site.

The area's longest street



Fruit vendors on the pavements of George Town

Mint Street, gets its name from the authorized mint that was set up here in 1841 to produce gold coins for the British as well as for various local rulers. The mint buildings are now part of the government printing press.

The 17th-century

houses lining George Town were once the residences and business centres of Indian as well as Portuguese, Armenian and other foreign traders.

Armenian Street is named after the many Armenians who lived here, while **Coral Merchant Street** housed a small Jewish community that traded in corals. Today, each street in George Town is dominated by a particular trade. Anderson Street specializes in paper, gram merchants operate from Audiappa Naicken Street, while textile wholesalers have their warehouses on Govindappa Naicken Street and Godown Street. Some streets, such as Kasi Chetty Street and Narayana-mudali Street, are lined with shops selling fancy goods and imported bric-a-brac.

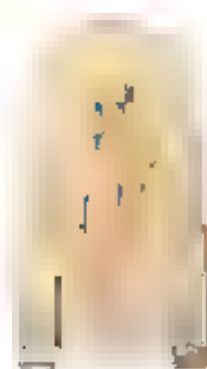
ROBERT CLIVE (1725–74)



A portrait of Robert Clive by Nathaniel Dance (1773)

One of the most flamboyant personalities in the history of British India, Robert Clive was only 19 when he began his career as a clerk for the East India Company at Fort St George. Soon tiring of paperwork, he became a soldier and fought many successful battles (*see p52*) including the Carnatic Wars, which established the Company's rule in South India. Clive was given the stewardship of Fort St George and later became Governor of Bengal. The wealth he amassed in India led to his trial in England, on charges of corruption. Clive committed suicide in 1774.

St Andrew's Kirk ③

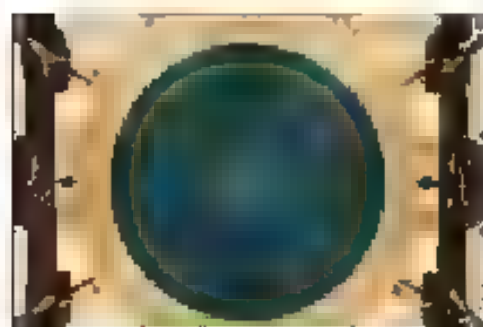


A memorial plaque

A magnificent example of Neo-Classical architecture St Andrew's Kirk was consecrated in 1821. Inspired by St Martin-in-the-Fields in London, it was designed and executed by Major Thomas de Havilland and Colonel James Caldwell of the Madras Engineers, at a cost of £20,000. The body of the church is a circle, with rectangular compartments to the east and west. The circular part, 24.5 m (80 ft) in diameter, is crowned by a shallow masonry dome coloured a deep blue. This is painted with golden stars and supported by 16 fluted pillars with Corinthian capitals.



A view of St Andrew's Kirk with its towering steeple



★ Dome

An architectural marvel, the dome has a framework of brick supported by an annular arch and is filled in by pottery cones. Its blue interior is formed by crushed sea shells mixed with lapis lazuli.



Stained glass

The stained glass windows above the altar in warm, rich colours, are among the glories of the church.



Pews

Superb mahogany pews and a pulpit furnish the interior. From 1839 the pews were let out to prominent citizens, the brass fittings that once held their name cards can still be seen.

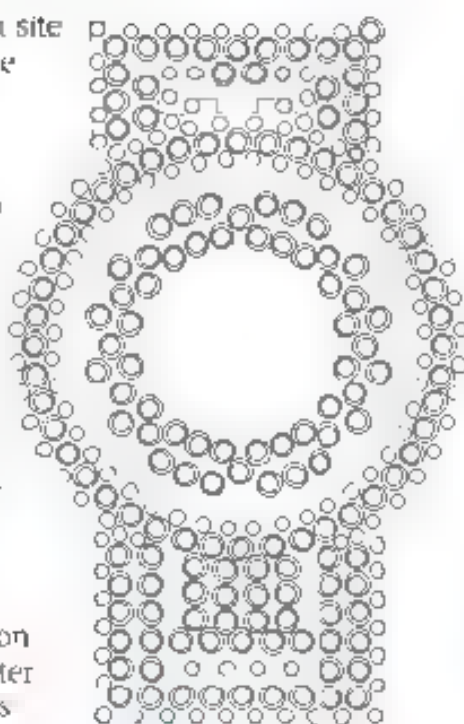
Sixteen fluted Corinthian columns support the dome, lending beauty and balance to the design.



The steeple is 50 m (164 ft) high, 4 m (13 ft) taller than its inspiration, St Martin-in-the-Fields in London. On top of the slim pyramidal spire is a bronze weathercock.

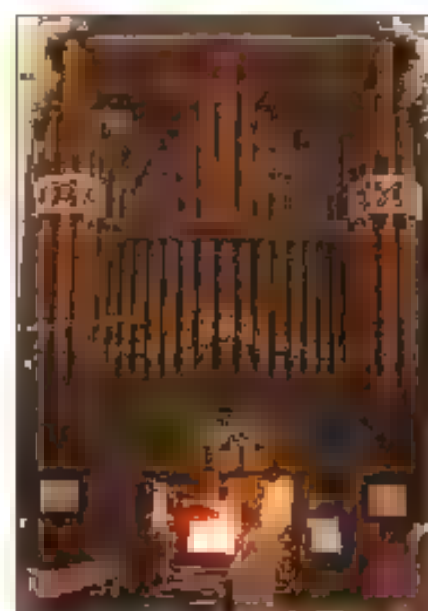
THE WELLS OF ST ANDREW'S KIRK

Because of sandy soil and a site prone to flooding during the monsoon, the church's foundations are actually a series of wells sunk to depths ranging from 4 m to 15 m (13 ft to 49 ft) below ground level. This example of engineering ingenuity is based on a structural practice followed by most indigenous buildings in the area. The wells are constructed either of specially made curved bricks, or pottery cylinders. These are placed so as to ensure maximum compaction of the soil, allowing the water to rise within them and thus protecting the main structure. The 150 wells were dug by a group of itinerant well-sinkers, the Mumvuties.



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0 yards 10



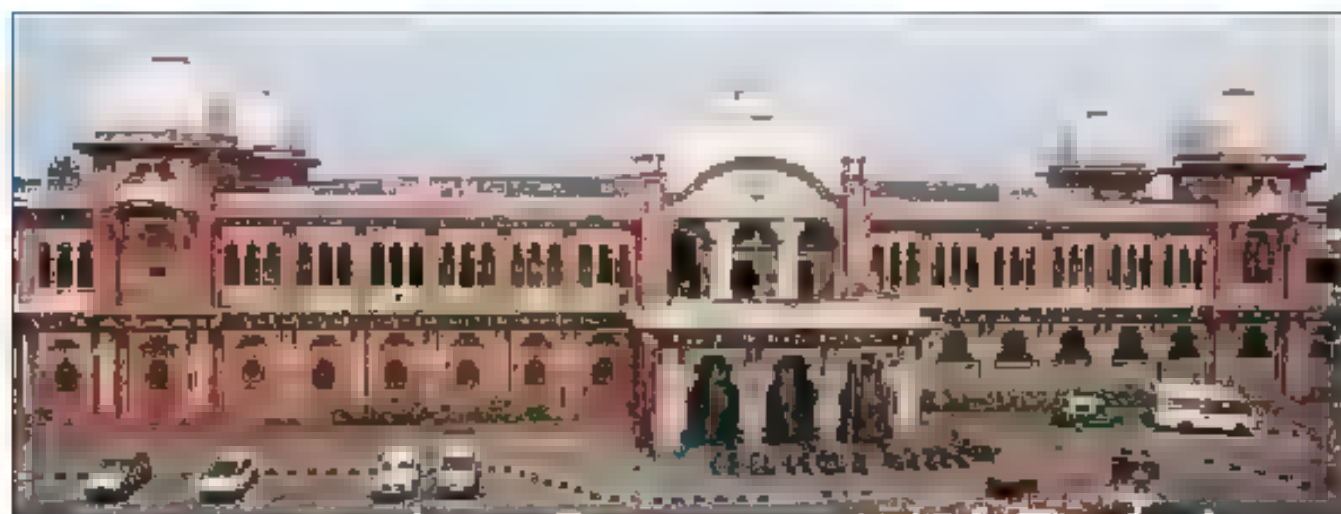
★ Pipe Organ

Dominating the altar is the handsome pipe organ in dull green and burnished gold. Installed in 1883, this instrument was built in Yorkshire, England.

STAR FEATURES

★ Dome

★ Pipe Organ



A view of Egmore Railway Station, one of the city's major landmarks

Egmore ⑤

Bounded by Periyar EVR High Rd & Pantheon Rd Egmore Railway Station, (044) 2819 4579.

The entire area south of Periyar EVR High Road (earlier known as Poonamalee High Road) and the curve of the Cooum river is known as Egmore. This was originally a small village that the East India Company acquired in the late 17th century, as it began to expand its territories. Egmore was also one of the earliest residential localities where wealthy Company merchants built palatial homes surrounded by luxuriant gardens – the so-called “garden houses” that were extremely popular in colonial Chennai.

The **Government College of Arts and Crafts** founded in 1850, stands on EVK Sampath Salai. This striking Gothic building and its art gallery were built by Robert Fellowes Chisholm (see p569), who was also appointed its superintendent (principal) in 1877. Its first Indian principal Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhary, was a renowned painter and sculptor in the 1950s. The artists' village at Cholamanda, (see p578) was established by his successor Dr KCS Panicker. Today the prestigious Government College is one of India's foremost art schools. Its gallery has regular exhibitions of contemporary painting and sculpture by artists and students.

To its west is the **Egmore Railway Station**, another of Chisholm's architectural gems. This is a handsome building

constructed in Indo-Saracenic style, with unconventional flatish domes and pointed arches. The station, operational since the early 20th century, connects Chennai with the rest of Tamil Nadu and the south.

Today Egmore is the up-market commercial heart of Chennai, a concrete jungle of offices, department stores, boutiques and hotels. On Pantheon Road are the largest showrooms of Co-Optex (see p579), a unit of the Tamil Nadu Handloom Textiles Cooperative, which sells handwoven silk and cotton saris and fabrics from the state.

The Pantheon Complex ⑥

Pantheon Rd. **Tel** (044) 2819 3778

Sat–Thu public hrs

Connemara Public Library

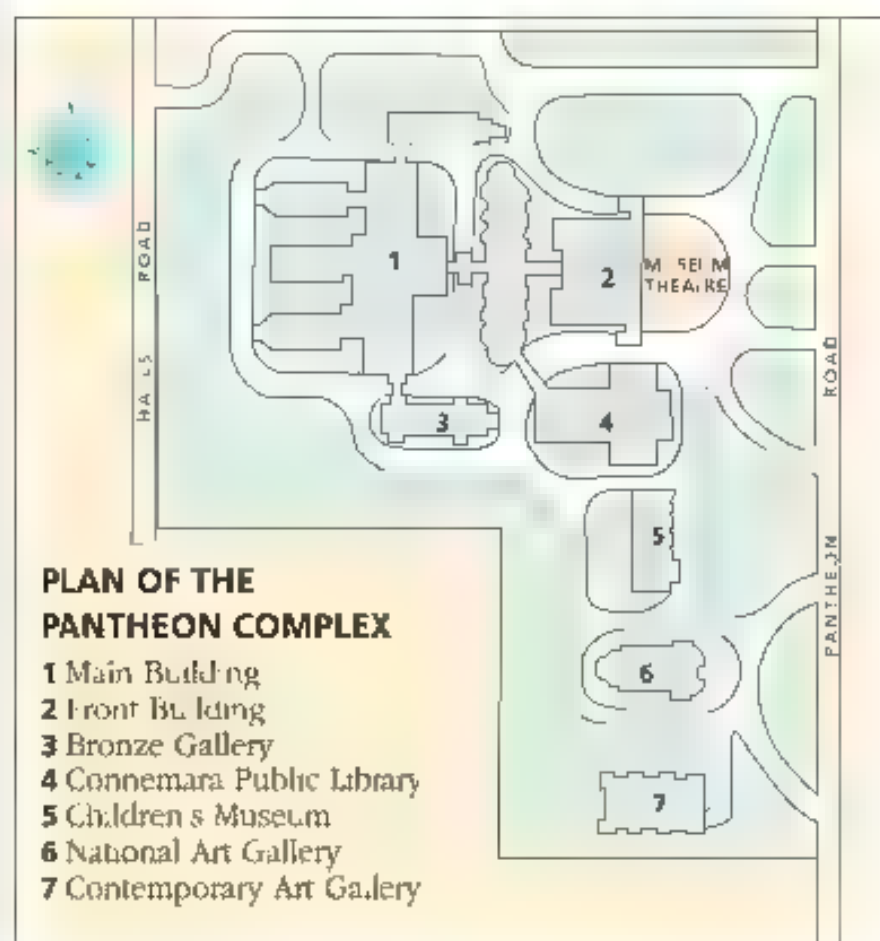
Tel (044) 2819 1842 daily



Standing Buddhas from Amravati

This complex of cultural institutions derives its name from The Pantheon, where the Public Assembly Rooms were housed in the 18th century. At the time, its spacious tree-lined grounds were the venue for all public entertainment in the city.

The Indo-Saracenic **Government Museum**, with its faded red walls and labyrinth of staircases and





The façade of the National Art Gallery, built in Neo-Mughal style

interconnecting galleries, is spread over five sections of a large complex, each with a specific collection of objects. The 30,000-odd exhibits range from rocks and fossils to books and sculptures.

The Archaeological Section, in the main building, is noted for its exceptional collection of South Indian antiquities. The exhibits include stone and metal sculpture, woodcarvings and manuscripts. Its rare collection of Buddhist antiquities numbers over 1,500 pieces. A major section comprises artifacts from Amravati (see p675) that were brought here in the early 1800s by an intrepid Englishman, Colonel Colin Mackenzie. On display are sculptural reliefs, panels and free-standing statues. Objects include a 2nd-century votive slab with a rendering of a stupa, and numerous stone panels with episodes from the Buddha's life depicted in low relief.

The Numismatics Section has a large collection of coins, particularly South Indian and Mughal coins. There are also some gold Gupta coins with Sanskrit inscriptions.

The Government Museum was one of the earliest institutions in India where ethnology and prehistoric archaeology were represented as museum subjects. The Anthropology Section, in the front building, has a good collection of prehistoric antiquities, including

cooking utensils and hunting tools, among them the first palaeolith in India, discovered in 1863 by Bruce Foote. The Zoological Section, in the main building, is one of the largest sections of the Museum. Although its scope is limited to South Indian fauna, a few non-indigenous animals and birds, such as the macaw, mandarin duck, and golden pheasant, have been added to enrich the collection. There is also an 18.5-m (60-ft) long whale skeleton on display. The adjoining 19th-century Museum Theatre, a semi-circular structure also built in Indo-Saracenic style, was initially used as a lecture hall. It is now a venue for public performances.

Some of the finest examples of South Indian bronze casting are on display in the **Bronze Gallery**. Its superb collection of almost 700 bronzes, specifically from the Pallava and Chola periods (between the 9th and 13th centuries) have been retrieved from temples and sites in the region. There are many impressive sculptures of the Nataraja – the depiction of Shiva performing his cosmic dance of creation (see p566). Another outstanding piece



Parvati, 9th century, Chola period

is an 11th-century Chola Ardhanarisvara, a composite figure where Shiva and his consort Parvati are joined together to form a holistic entity. Bronzes of other gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon include Rama, Sita and Ganesha. The panorama of images also includes various Buddhist bronzes from Amravati, a Chola Tara and Maitreya Avalokitesvara, and 11th-century images of various Jain *tirthankaras*.

Opposite is the imposing **Connemara Public Library** inaugurated in 1896. This structure, with its profuse stucco decoration, woodwork and stained-glass windows, was named after a dissolute brother of the viceroy, Lord Mayo. It is one of India's four national libraries and contains every book published in the country. Its oldest and most prized possession is a Bible, dated 1608.

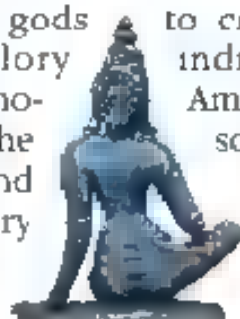
The **National Art Gallery**, the former Victoria Memorial Hall and Technical Institute, is perhaps the finest building in the complex. Designed by Henry Irwin, one of the city's most celebrated architects, it was constructed in 1909 in Neo-Mughal style with a pink sandstone finish. Its immense door echoes the monumental gateways of Fatehpur Sikri (see pp180–83). On display are more Chola bronzes, including two fine images of Rama and Sita, and a superb 11th-century Nataraja. Nearby, the **Contemporary Art Gallery** has a collection of contemporary Indian art, with works by renowned South Indian artists, among them Raja Ravi Varma (see p626).



A 2nd-century stupa panel from Amravati

Shiva, the Cosmic Dancer

Bronze sculptures depicting gods and goddesses, are the glory of South Indian art. Strict iconographic guidelines determine the proportions of each image and the symbolic meaning of every stance, hand gesture, weapon, and adornment. Master sculptors working within these rules were able, nevertheless,



A slender bronze image of Parvati

to create images of extraordinary individuality, power and grace. Among the most remarkable bronze sculptures are those of Shiva as Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer, and his wife Parvati. Richly symbolic in their iconography, they were made during the Chola period from the 9th to the 13th centuries.

NATARAJA

The Nataraja figure of Shiva as the Cosmic Dancer symbolizes nature's cycle of evolution and transmutation, and displays the Chola artists' mastery of form and expression.

A tiny crescent moon, a symbol of the passage of time, balances in his hair.

Goddess Ganga is shown among Shiva's flying locks since it was Shiva who eased her descent to earth (see p163).

The drum in his right hand symbolizes the rhythm of creation.

An open palm grants freedom from fear.

The left palm, pointing to the foot, symbolizes salvation from ignorance.

The left leg is lifted up in an animated dance movement.

The fire in the left hand symbolizes destruction.

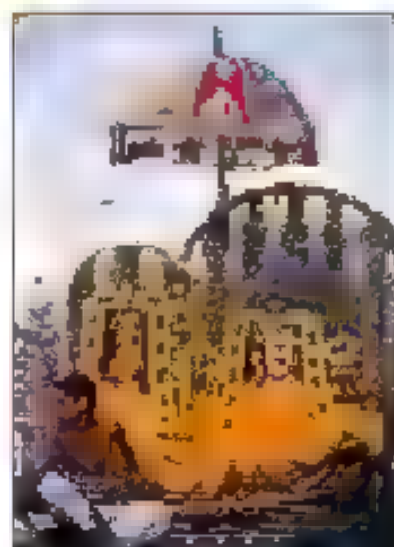
The ring of flames symbolizes the cosmos.



The marriage of Shiva and Parvati is a beautiful example of Chola art. It shows Shiva, standing regal and tall, tenderly holding his bashful bride Parvati's hand. Vishnu, as the brother of Parvati, is shown as an onlooker.

The right leg tramples Apasmara, a dwarfish figure representing ignorance.

Bronze images representing the main temple deity are taken out in processions on festive occasions. These images are clad in silk and decked with sandalwood paste and floral garlands.





The multi-arched façade of the Thousand Lights Mosque

Anna Salai 6

From Cooum Island to Little Mount
Rajaji Hall Tel (044) 2536 5655.

☐ daily

A long arterial road leading from north Chennai to Little Mount at its southern end (see p573), Anna Salai (or Mount Road) is the city's main thoroughfare. The "garden houses" that belonged to Chennai's elite stood on either side of it until well into the early years of the 20th century. Today, it is a modern commercial road, lined with boardings depicting film stars, and the expansive homes of the past have been replaced by multistoreyed buildings.

Anna Salai begins on an island in Cooum Creek, just south of Fort St George. The site is watched over by the statue of Sir Thomas Munro, the governor of the Madras Presidency from 1819 to 1826. Nearby, set in an expanse of

greenery, is the prestigious **Gymkhana Club**. Sited close to the army headquarters, this was an exclusive facility for military officers. Until 1920, its membership was restricted to garrison officers only and, even today, the club grounds belong to the armed services.

The **Old Government Estate** southwest of the Gymkhana Club, houses the mansion where the governors of Madras once lived in regal splendour. Though the main building is falling apart, the banqueting hall, built in 1802 by the second Lord Clive, the eldest son of Robert Clive, retains its grandeur. It was named **Rajaji Hall** after the first Indian governor-general C Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji. Inside this elegant Neo-Classical building, an impressive broad staircase leads up to the vast banqueting hall, which has beautiful park-like chandeliers. Anna Salai then enters its

commercial stretch. Along this length of the road are some of the city's oldest commercial landmarks, including one of India's largest bookshops **Higginbotham's** (see p574).

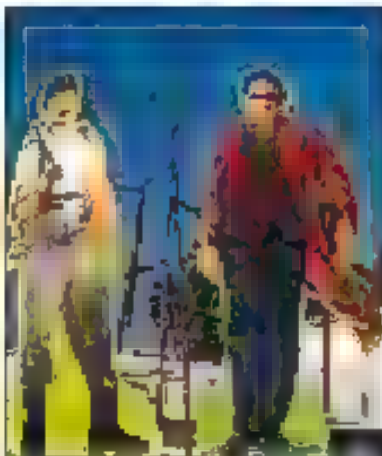
Spencer's, an international department store, and the **Taj Connemara**, one of the city's finest hotels (see p713).

Across the road is the **Old Madras Club**, now somewhat dilapidated. Established in 1837, it was known in its heyday as the "Ace of Clubs". The 19th-century **Thousand Lights Mosque** further down, gets its name from the tradition of lighting 1,000 oil lamps to illuminate the Assembly Hall that once occupied the site. Standing farther south is **St George's Cathedral**, planned by James Lilian Caldwell and built by Thomas de Havilland in 1814. Its 42 m (138 ft) tall spire is one of Chennai's major landmarks.



Main altar in St George's Cathedral, built in the early 19th century

FILM STARS AND POLITICS



Hoardings depicting popular South Indian heroes

The South Indian film industry, particularly Tamil and Telugu cinema, is credited with having been the breeding ground of many politicians. The first chief minister from the Dravidian Party (then called DMK) the late Dr CN Annadurai, as well as his immediate successor, M Karunanidhi, were both scriptwriters with large followings. However, the most remarkable actor-turned-politician was Marudur Gopalamenon Ramachandran, whose portrayal of a swashbuckling hero made him the embodiment of righteousness. Popularly known as MGR, he acquired a cult status in the region and was chief minister of Tamil Nadu from 1977 to 1987. His co-star and protégée, Jayalalitha, another charismatic chief minister, was ousted on charges of corruption in 2001, but was reinstated later that year. Current heroes, such as Rajnikant and Chiranjeevi, have more macho images that depend heavily on daredevil stunts. They, too, have fans throughout South India.

A Walk along the Marina 7

Chennai's seashore hosts one of India's largest urban beaches, stretching for 13 km (8 miles) along the city's eastern flank. The Marina, connecting Fort St George with San Thomé Basilica almost 5 km (3 miles) away, was built by Mounstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, the governor between 1881 and 1886. Described by architectural historian Philip Davies as "one of the most beautiful marine promenades in the world", it is a favourite place for Chennai's citizens to escape the humid heat of the city and enjoy the sea breezes. The walk along Kamarajar Salai (earlier known as South Beach Road) takes in parks, tree-lined cobbled streets and spectacular colonial and Indo-Saracenic buildings



The Indo-Saracenic Presidency College, nucleus of Madras University

Anna Park

The walk starts from the Victory War Memorial ① which marks the north end of Kamarajar Salai. This memorial originally commemorated the victory of the Allied armies during World War I and was later dedicated to the memory of those soldiers from the Madras Presidency who lost their lives in World War II. To its south, in Anna Park, is the Anna Samadhi ②, a memorial erected in honour of CN Annadurai, the former chief minister of Tamil Nadu who introduced significant political and social reforms in the state. Further south is the MGR Samadhi ③, a commemorative garden with gateways and pathways built in honour of the popular Tamil film icon and chief minister, MG Ramachandran (see p567). An array of souvenir shops and eateries can be found along this

stretch of the beach, attracting tourists from the rest of the state. Particularly interesting is the Sunday market, with its curious jumble of goods.

North Marina

Across Kamarajar Salai is a series of imposing red brick buildings, built in a combination of architectural styles, which include Indian and Moorish features. The Indo-Saracenic Madras University ④ was founded in 1857, making it one of the oldest universities in India. An architectural marvel, the Senate House ⑤ was designed by Robert Chisholm in a mixture of Byzantine and Saracenic styles. This became the headquarters of Madras University in 1879. These buildings now stand in what was once the sprawling estate of the old Chepauk Palace ⑥. This splendid Indo-



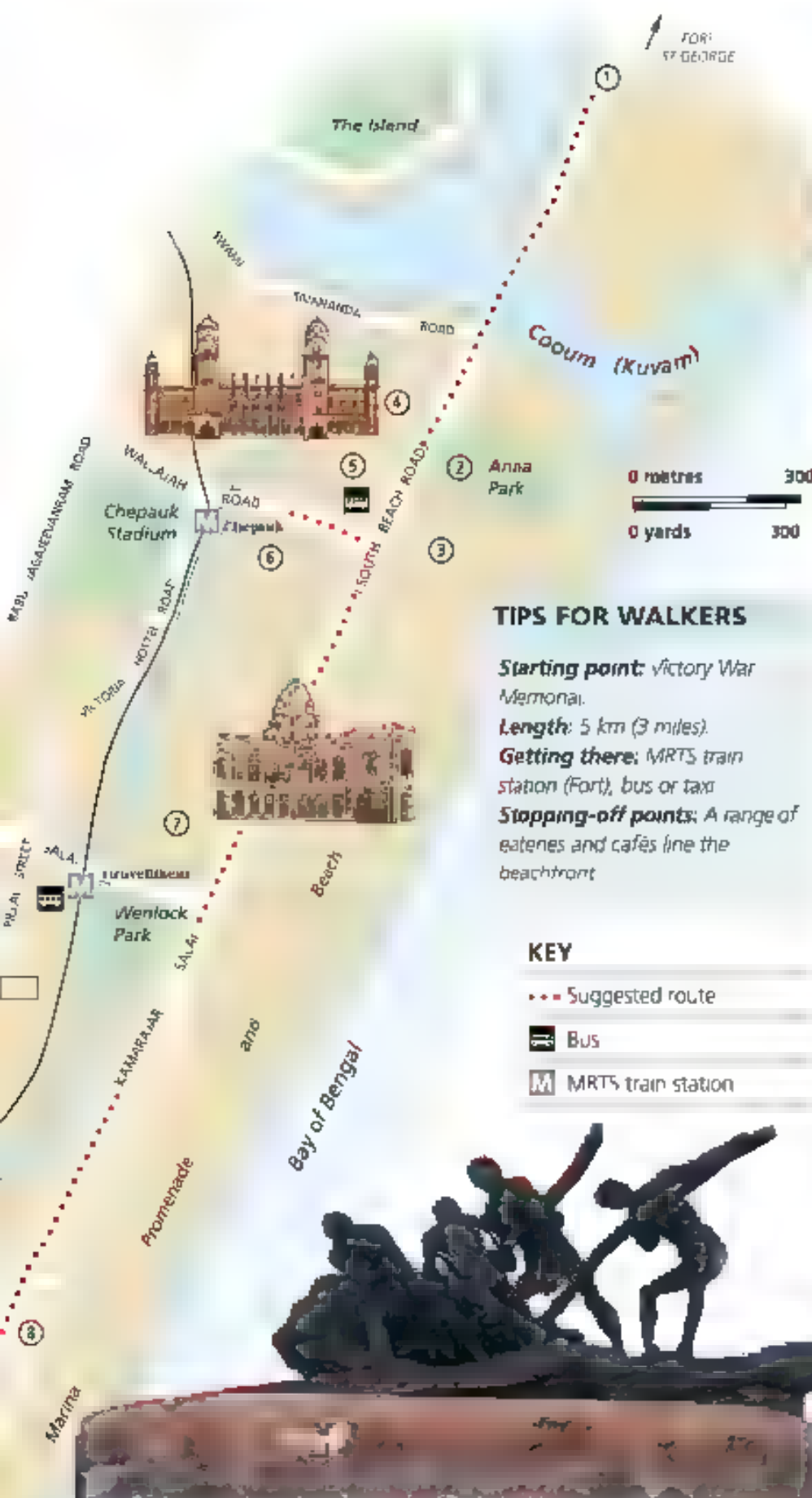
Victory War Memorial, Kamarajar Salai

Saracenic structure, on Walajah Road, was once the home of the Nawab of Arcot. Though the palace was built in 1768, Chisholm added the extensions, including the tower that once connected the two wings. It now houses government offices. Chepauk Stadium, Chennai's famous cricket ground, lies behind the palace. Further down the road is Presidency College ⑦, the first institution in South India for higher education, founded in 1840. This rather austere structure has a ribbed dome with four clocks on its surface. Among the famous alumni of the college are the first Indian governor-general C Rajagopalachari and the Nobel Prize-winning physicists CV Raman and his nephew S Chandrasekhar.

South Marina

Further south, an impressive landmark on Kamarajar Salai is the statue *Triumph of Labour* ⑧.





TIPS FOR WALKERS

Starting point: Victory War Memorial.

Length: 5 km (3 miles).

Getting there: MRTS train station (Fort), bus or taxi.

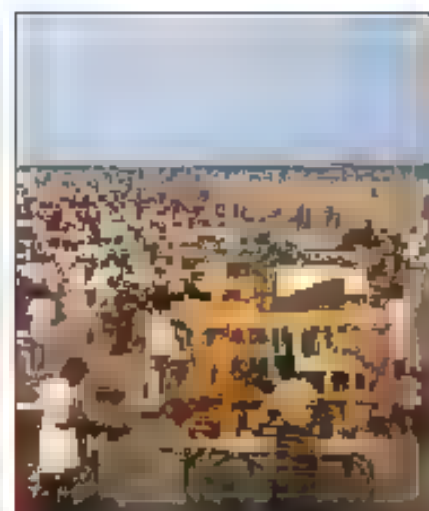
Stopping-off points: A range of eateries and cafés line the beachfront.

KEY

--- Suggested route

Bus

MRTS train station



A busy evening scene on the Marina Beach

This sculpture was created by Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhary (see p564), who became the first Indian principal of the Madras School of Arts and Crafts in 1929.

West of the main road, off Annie Besant Road, is the Ice House ① till recently a women's hostel known as Vivekananda House. In the 1890s, this circular building, with a stone pineapple perched on its roof, was a storehouse for ice, which was imported all the way from New England (USA). It was also the site from which Swami Vivekananda (see p615) delivered his speeches when he visited the city. It has now been handed over to the Ramakrishna Mission which has plans to restore it. Further south is Queen Mary's College ⑩, today the Madras College for Women. Opened in July 1914, this was Chennai's first women's college. A bust of the queen still graces the entrance of the building. An imposing lighthouse ⑪ marks the southern end of the Marina.

Triumph of Labour by Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhary, 1959

ROBERT CHISHOLM'S LEGACY

Robert Fellowes Chisholm (1845–84) was among the most talented architects in India in the mid-19th century. In 1864, Chisholm's designs for the proposed Presidency College and Senate House won a competition, and he was appointed the consulting architect to the Madras government. The next 15 years saw considerable building activity along the Marina, where many innovative buildings were erected. Chisholm's designs blended Italian and Saracenic features so that the new structures would harmonize with the existing Chepauk Palace. For many years he was the head of the School of Industrial Art founded in 1855 and now known as the Government College of Fine Arts.



Senate House, Robert Chisholm's signature building, completed in 1873



Fruits on sale at Triplicane Market

Triplicane 8

Off Kamarajar Salai (South Beach Rd) **Parthasarathi Temple** ☐ daily ☒ *Neerati Utsavam* (Dec)

The crowded suburb of Triplicane was among the first villages to be acquired by the East India Company in the 1670s. It derives its name from the sacred ally tank (*tiru-ali-kent*) that once stood here. One of the oldest temples in the city, the historic **Parthasarathi Temple**, is situated in Triplicane. Built in the 9th century, the temple is dedicated to Krishna (or Partha) in his role as Arjuna's divine charioteer (*sarathi*) in the epic, the *Mahabharata* (see p26). The temple festival, in December, attracts thousands of devotees. At one time, the residences of the priestly Brahmin caste were clustered in the narrow lanes around the temple. Among them were the homes of the mathematical genius, Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887–1920), and the early 20th-century nationalist poet, Subramania Bharati.



The graceful façade of Wallajah Mosque, with its flanking minarets

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp712–13 and pp739–40

Triplicane was once part of the kingdom of Golconda (see pp666–7), and as a result this quarter has the largest concentration of Muslims in the city. The Nawab of Arcot, Muhammad Ali Wallajah (1749–95), an ally of the British in their struggle for power against the French, contributed generously to the construction of a large mosque here in 1795, known as the **Wallajah (Big) Mosque**, this beautiful grey granite structure with slender minarets is situated on Triplicane High Road. The adjoining graveyard contains the tombs of various Muslim saints. The nawab's descendants still live in Triplicane, in a stately mansion known as **Amir Mahal**. Constructed in 1798, it became their residence after the Chepauk Palace (see p568) was taken over by the British.

Mylapore & San Thomé 9

S of Triplicane **Kapaleshwara Temple**
☐ daily **Basilica of San Thomé**
☐ daily **Luz Church** ☐ daily

The site of a great Pallava port in the 7th and 8th centuries, Mylapore is today one of the busiest parts of the city. This traditional quarter, with its religious organizations, tiny houses and lively bazaars, is dominated by the **Kapaleshwara Temple**, the largest in Chennai. The main deity, Shiva, is symbolized as a peacock (*mayil*), thus giving the area its original name, Mayilapura, the "Town of the Peacocks". According to legend, Shiva's consort, Parvati, assumed the form of a peahen to worship Shiva, represented here by his linga.

A sculptural panel in a small shrine in the courtyard depicts the legend. The present temple was built after the original was destroyed by the Portuguese in the 16th century. Mylapore's links with Christianity date to the 1st century AD, to the time of St Thomas (see p573). In the 10th century a group of Nestorian Christians from Persia (Iran) dis-



The Gothic-style Basilica of San Thomé

covered the saint's burial site and built a church and tomb. The Portuguese, following the trail of the saint, established the settlement of San Thomé in the early 16th century. The present **Basilica of San Thomé**, over the tomb of the saint, is an impressive Gothic-style structure built in 1898. It has an ornate interior with magnificent stained-glass windows and a towering steeple. The crypt is said to contain a small bone from the saint's hand and the weapon that killed him.

Nearby is the **Luz Church**, which was built by a Franciscan monk in 1516, making it the oldest Catholic church in Chennai.

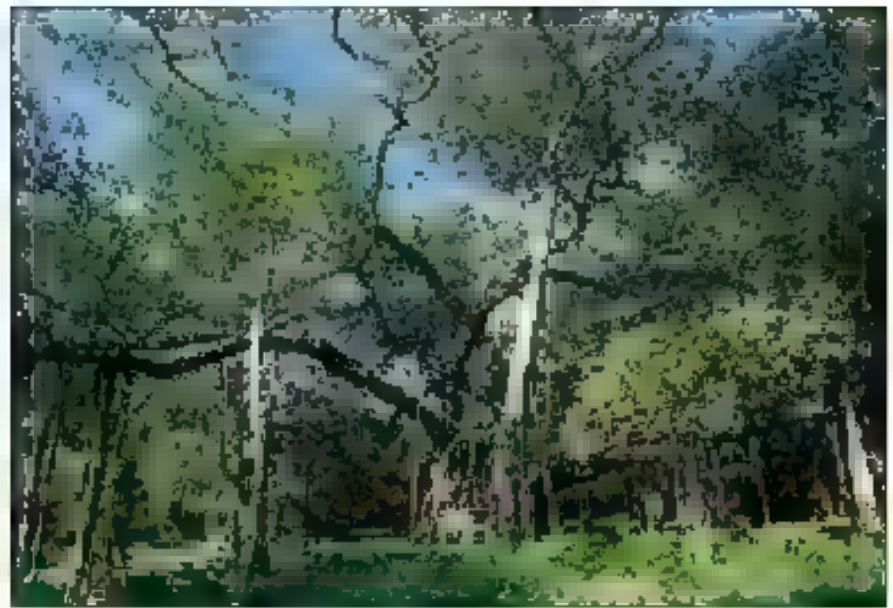
Adyar 10

S of San Thome, across Adyar river
Theosophical Society Tel (044)
 2491 2474 ☐ Mon-Fri & Sat
 morn, **Brodie Castle** ☐ daily

Few places in Chennai offer greater serenity than the sprawling gardens of the **Theosophical Society** situated in the city's Adyar neighbourhood, on the banks of the Adyar river. Founded in New York in 1875, the Society moved here seven years later when it acquired Huddleston Gardens. Built in 1776 by John Huddleston, a wealthy civilian, this large mansion is today the world headquarters of the Society. Its magnificent 186-ha (270-acre) estate comprises several 19th-century buildings, one of which is the former home of its founder Colonel Henry S Olcott.

The main building houses the Great Hall, almost spartan in its simplicity, where prayer meetings are held. Bas-reliefs representing the different faiths, and engravings of verses taken from the holy books of all world religions can be seen here. There are also marble statues of the founders, Colonel Olcott and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, as well as one of Annie Besant, who became president in 1907.

The Adyar Library and Research Centre, founded by Olcott in 1886, is one of the finest libraries in India. Its collection of 165,000 books and 20,000 palm-leaf and parchment manuscripts has made it a valuable repository for Indological research. The surrounding tranquil gardens have shrines dedicated to



The 400-year-old banyan tree in the gardens of the Theosophical Society

various faiths. The greatest attraction here, however, is the 400-year-old banyan tree, whose spreading branches cover an immense area of 4,180 sq m (44,993 sq ft). Over the decades, many of the Society's meetings and spiritual discourses were held under its canopy. Unfortunately, a terrible storm in 1989 destroyed its main trunk.

Brodie Castle, north of the Theosophical Society, is an imposing white structure on the banks of the Adyar. Now known as Thirral, it houses the prestigious College of Carnatic Music. Built in 1796 by James Brodie, an employee of the East India Company, it is said to be among the first "garden-houses" built in the city. These spacious, airy

houses with broad pillared verandahs, set in sprawling wooded gardens, were characteristic of colonial Chennai. This house later became the home of the first Chief Justice of the Madras Supreme Court.

Further north of Brodie Castle is the **Madras Club**, built by George Moubray, who came to India as an accountant in 1771. He acquired 42 ha (104 acres) of land on the banks of the Adyar, and built a house with a central cupola surrounded by a beautiful garden. Known as Moubray's Cupola, this was once the exclusive preserve of the city's European population. Indians were only allowed membership in 1964, after it merged with the Adyar Club.



The pillared entrance of Brodie Castle in Adyar

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

In the 1870s, Colonel Henry S Olcott, a veteran of the American Civil War, met the Russian aristocrat and clairvoyant, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (in Vermont, USA) at the farm of the Christian Scientist, Mary Baker Eddy. Soon after

they launched a movement to foster the spirit of universal brotherhood, aiming to create a Utopian society in which people of all castes, creeds and colour could live in harmony. The movement attracted great thinkers and intellectual

trials among them Dr Annie Besant, president of the Indian National Congress in 1917. The idea of forming a national political party was, in fact, first voiced in the 1890s at the Society's headquarters in Adyar, under the banyan tree, by the British civil servant AO Hume. The famous philosopher Jada Krishnamurti was also associated with the Society.



Theosophical Society



A Bharat Natyam dance lesson in progress at Kalakshetra

Kalakshetra ①

Thiruvananthapuram, East Coast Rd. or taxi. **Tel** (044) 2452 1844. daily
 Kalakshetra Arts Festival (Dec/Jan).

This pioneering institution for classical dance, music and the fine arts, established in 1936, was the brainchild of Rukmini Devi. A protégée of Annie Besant, she was deeply influenced by the progressive views of the Theosophical Society (see p571). At 16, she scandalized conservative society by marrying George Sydney Arundale, the 40-year-old Australian principal of the Society's school. The couple's extensive travels around the world exposed Rukmini to the world of Western culture, specially dance, inspiring her to study ballet under the great Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova. Back in Chennai, she again defied tradition by learning and performing the classical *dastattam*, hitherto the domain of *devadāsīs* (temple dancers). The International Centre for the Arts, which she set up for the revival of this dance form now called Bharat Natyam (see p29), is today Kalakshetra, the "Temple of Art".

The school is set in a vast 30-hectare (99-acre) campus, where classical music and dance are taught according to the traditional methods, by which a guru imparts knowledge to a small group of students. Some of India's best known dancers, including Yamini Krishnamurti, and the institute's current director Leela Samson, were trained

here. At the end of each year, a festival is held and performances are staged in an auditorium designed like a *kovattambulam*, the traditional theatre of Kerala temples (see p639).

MGR Film City ⑫

Near Indira Nagar **Tel** (044) 2254 2424. daily extra charges.

One of Chennai's newest attractions is a film city, dedicated to the memory of the hugely popular matinee idol, MG Ramachandran (see p567). This is now the most popular location for Chennai's flourishing Tamil film industry, which is second only to Mumbai (see pp32-3) in film production. A fantasy world of extravagant sets and hi-tech equipment, Film City attracts starstruck fans from all over Tamil Nadu, who come here to catch a glimpse of their favourite film stars.



A film set in MGR Film City

Guindy National Park ⑬

S Chennai, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rd.
 Guindy station Wed-Mon
 Raj Bhavan to public

Once a distant suburb which was nearly twice its current size, Guindy has now been engulfed by the fast growing metropolis of Greater Chennai. Originally part of the private forest surrounding Guindy Lodge, a portion was officially declared the Guindy National Park in 1977. This predominantly dry deciduous scrub jungle of acacia is interspersed with larger trees such as sandalwood (*Santalum album*), banyan (*Ficus bengalensis*) and jamun (*Syzygium cumini*). Its most famous residents are the herds of endangered black buck (*Antelope cervicapra*), introduced in 1924. Among its 130 species of birds are raptors such as the honey buzzard and the white-bellied sea eagle. Winter is the best time for birdwatching, when migrant birds

visit the forest. Also located within the park is the **Madras Snake Park**, established in the 1970s by Ronald Whitaker, the American zoologist, who also set up the Crocodile Bank outside Chennai (see p578). Today, the well-maintained Snake Park houses

numerous species of snakes, among them king cobras, vipers and pythons. Other reptiles include crocodiles.

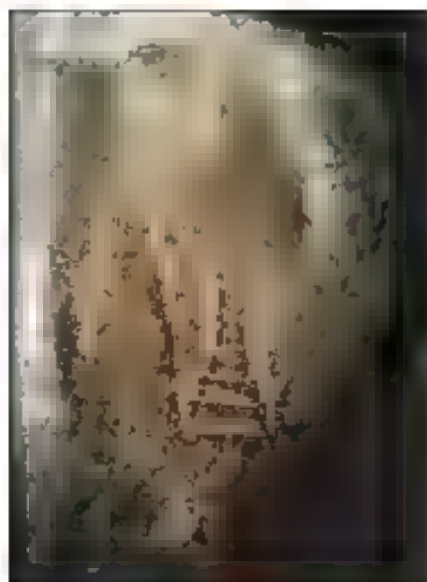


A song-and-dance sequence being shot on location for a Tamil movie

turtles and lizards. Large information boards, strategically placed, provide interesting details on the habitat and behaviour of the various species. For those who are interested, there are live demonstrations of venom extraction; the venom is used as an antidote for snake bites.

The historic 300-year-old Gandy Lodge, to the west of the Park, is now the **Raj Bhavan**, the residence of the governor of Tamil Nadu. Built as a weekend retreat for the city's British rulers, this handsome white building was renovated and expanded in the mid-1800s by the then governor, Grant-Duff.

Today Gandy has some of the city's most prestigious institutions. The area also has many impressive memorials to modern India's leaders: Mahatma Gandhi, K. Kamara and C. Rajagopalachari.



The Masonry Cross, engraved on a rock in the cave, Little Mount



Façade of the Church of Our Lady of Expectations, Mount of St Thomas

Little Mount & Mount of St Thomas 18

SW Chennai. Near Marmalag Bridge
 St Thomas Mount station 

A rock-hewn cave on Little Mount is believed to be the place where, in AD 72, the mortally wounded St Thomas sought refuge. Near the modern **Church of Our Lady of Good Health** is the older **Blessed Sacrament Chapel** built by the Portuguese over the cave. Inside the cave is the opening through which the fleeing saint is said to have retreated, leaving behind a still visible imprint of his hand near the entrance. At the rear end of the cave is the Masonry Cross before which St Thomas is said to have prayed. By the **Church of the Resurrection** is a perennial

spring with curative powers. Legend claims that the spring originated when St Thomas struck the rock with his staff to provide water for his thirsty congregation.

About 5 km (2 miles) southwest of Little Mount is the 95-m (312-ft-tall) Mount of St Thomas or Great Mount. A flight of 132 steps leads to the summit and the **Church of Our Lady of Expectations** built by the Portuguese in the 16th century. The most important relic here is the ancient stone cross embedded into the wall of the altar, said to have been engraved by the saint himself; this is the legendary "bleeding cross" that miraculously bled between 1558 and 1704.

Below the eastern flank of the Mount is the **Cantonment** area, with its shady streets lined with 18th-century Neo-Classical bungalows.

ST THOMAS IN INDIA

According to legend, St Thomas or Doubting Thomas, one of the 12 apostles, came to South India soon after Jesus Christ died. He is said to have arrived in Cranganore (see p649) in AD 52 and spent the next 12 years along the Malabar Coast, spreading the Gospel and converting the local population. He gradually moved eastwards and finally settled in Mylapore (see p570). He spent the last years of his life in a cave on Little Mount, from where he would walk every day to the beach, resting for a while and preaching in the groves. It is said that one day in AD 72, while praying on the Mount of St Thomas, he was mortally wounded by a lance, and fled to Little Mount, where he died. His body was carried by his converts to San Thomé, where he was buried in the crypt of the small chapel he had built. This is today the **Basilica of San Thomé** and the large stained-glass window depicts his story. The Portuguese colonized Mylapore in the early 16th century, lured by accounts left by the 13th-century Venetian traveler, Marco Polo, who had visited the early Nestorian chapel here. The saint holds a special place in the hearts of Indians and was decreed the Apostle of India in 1972.



Portrait of St Thomas

Shopping & Entertainment in Chennai

As the capital of Tamil Nadu, Chennai has an excellent selection of handicrafts and handwoven textiles from the state. From shimmering silks in glowing colours and finely woven cottons to jewellery and replicas of Chola bronzes, the choice is enormous. The city's shopping centres include up-market department stores, malls and trendy boutiques, as well as the vibrant local bazaars which sell a wide range of merchandise. Chennai is also the cultural capital of South India, where performances of classical dance and music take place throughout the year. The height of the cultural season is from mid-December to mid-January, when the city hosts the prestigious Chennai Festival.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

The best shopping in Chennai can be found in the more traditional areas, such as Panagal Park, Pondy and Burma bazaars, and the lanes around the temple at Mylapore. These were small street markets that have now grown into mini shopping malls, where everything is available at bargain prices. Chennai's oldest department store, Spencers, partially burned down in the 1980s, and has now been rebuilt as a modern mall. It houses shops selling merchandise as varied as groceries and imported Swiss watches. Next door is the city's oldest landmark, VIT (Victoria Technical Institute), where handicrafts and a range of good quality linen are sold. This charitable organization supports South Indian Christian missions that specialize in exquisite hand-embroidery.

Most shops are open Monday to Friday from 9-30am to 7pm. Bazaars however keep more flexible hours.

JEWELLERY AND ANTIQUES

The best place for high quality traditional South Indian gold jewellery is **Vummidi Bangaru Jewellers**. They also stock excellent reproductions of the gem-encrusted costume jewellery worn by classical dancers. **Prince Jewellery**, in Panagal Park, has jewellery from Kerala and also specializes in light weight gold ornaments,

Modern and traditional silverware and jewellery are available at **Sukhra and Amethyst**.

Genuine antiques are hard to find. However, **Rani Arts & Crafts** stocks copies of old artifacts, including brass and metal images and objects. Tanjore (Thanjavur) paintings (see p597) and lacquerware

TEXTILES AND SARIS

Tamil Nadu is renowned for the richness and variety of its silk and cotton textiles, a good selection of which is available in Chennai. **Radha Silks**, **Kumaran Silks** and **Sundari Silks** are famous all over India for their wonderful range of fabrics and silk saris from Kanchipuram (see p583). **Nalli's**, a huge multistoreyed shop, has the widest range of Kanchipuram saris, and is always packed with local shoppers, particularly during the festival and wedding seasons. Other outlets are **Man Mandir** and **Shilpi**, a small boutique that sells saris and home furnishings. **Fabindia** too, stocks furnishings and ready-made garments. A good variety of textiles can be found at **Co-optex**, the large Tamil Nadu Cooperative of Textiles showroom. This pioneering society has encouraged the revival of handlooms.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

A fine selection of handicrafts can be found at **Poompuhar**, the Tamil Nadu State Emporium. VIT also sells

handicrafts, though hand-embroidered linen and nightwear are their main specialities. **Cane and Bamboo** is another interesting little shop with an assortment of gift items and souvenirs.

Apparao Galleries not only stocks paintings by contemporary Indian artists, but also has an accessory shop for gifts and home products. Their boutique sells trendy designer-wear.

Naturally Auroville specializes in natural products made in the Pondicherry Ashram and Auroville (see pp586-8). The merchandise includes pottery, handmade paper, perfumed candles, incense sticks and aromatherapy oils and lotions.

Chennai is also a good place to shop for handcrafted musical instruments, such as the violin, *mridangam* and *veena*. While these are found at many outlets in the city, the best selections are available at **Musee Musicals** and **Sapthaswara Music Store**. **Music World** stocks a wide range of CDs and audio cassettes by well-known Carnatic musicians. The city also has a number of excellent bookshops. Of these the oldest and most well-stocked is **Higginbotham's**, established in 1844.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDES, TICKETS AND VENUES

Announcements of performances of Carnatic music (see p595) and classical dance such as Bharat Natyam (see p28) appear regularly in the entertainment columns of local newspapers. The city guides *Hallo! Madras* and *Chennai This Fortnight* list entertainment venues and information on tickets.

Performances of music and dance are held throughout the year. However, the peak season is from 15 December to 15 January, when the Chennai Festival, organized by the city's *sabbas* (cultural societies), takes place. During this period more than 500 concerts are held. The most prestigious cultural centre is the **Music Academy**. Other

venues are **Narada Gana Sabha**, **Sri Krishna Gana Sabha** and **Karthik Fine Arts**. Classical dance and music performances are also held at the **Museum Theatre** in the Pantheon Complex (see p364) and the auditorium at **Kalakshetra** (see p572).

MUSIC AND DANCE

Since the 1920s, Chennai has been the leading centre of Carnatic music and classical dance. The first music festival took place in December 1927 during the Madras session of the Indian National Congress. A year later, the Music Academy was established to promote Carnatic music, and in 1946, Rakmini Devi set up

Kalakshetra to popularize Bharat Natyam, the dance form once performed only in temples. Today, these two institutions along with the many *sabhas* are the major sponsors of music and dance events in the city.

During the season, music lovers gather in Chennai to hear India's top performers as well as promising new talent. Concerts of Carnatic music, both vocal and instrumental, begin in the morning and often last till midnight. Dance recitals are also held. Recently some dancers have experimented with the traditional repertoire to create a contemporary form that is a fusion of Indian folk and classical forms with Western themes.

CINEMA

The choice of films that show at Chennai's many cinemas, such as **Devi**, **Ega**, **Gaiety** (founded in 1919), and the **Sathyam Cineplex**, ranges from Bollywood and Tamil blockbusters to the latest Hollywood releases. Tamil films are very similar to those produced in Mumbai's Bollywood, with song and dance sequences and a great deal of melodrama. But they play a role far beyond mere entertainment – their themes often have a social message and their charismatic actors, with their political links (see p567), make them a potent medium of communication, especially among rural audiences.

DIRECTORY

JEWELLERY AND ANTIQUES

Amethyst

14 Padmavathi Rd,
Jeyapore Colony,
Gopalapuram.
Tel (044) 2835 1627

Prince Jewellery

13 Nageswara Rao Rd,
Panagai Park.
Tel (044) 2436 3137
769 Spencer Plaza,
Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2849 5817

Rani Arts & Crafts

8 Nowrojee Rd, Chetpet.
Tel (044) 2642 2948
73 Gangadareswar Koil St.
Tel (044) 2642 2948

Sukhra

42 North Mada St,
Mylapore.
Tel (044) 2461 0193

Vummidi Bangaru Jewellers

Rani Seethai Hall,
603 Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2849 3056.

TEXTILES AND SARIS

Co-optex

Pantheon Rd, Egmore.
Tel (044) 2819 2394

Fabindia

Ilford House, 3 Woods Rd
off Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2851 0395.

Kumaran Silks

12 Nageswaran Rd,
T Nagar.
Tel (044) 2434 3544.

Man Mandir

15 Khader Nawaz Khan
Rd, Nungambakkam.
Tel (044) 2823 9474

Nalli's

9 Nageswaran Rd,
T Nagar.
Tel (044) 2434 4115.

Radha Silks

Sannathi St, Mylapore.
Tel (044) 2494 1906.

Shilpi

1 GG Minar, 23 College
Rd, Nungambakkam.
Tel (044) 2828 2603
29, CP Ramaswamy Rd.
Tel (044) 2499 7526.

Sundari Silks

54-55 North Usman Rd,
T Nagar.
Tel (044) 2814 3093.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Apparao Galleries

7 Wallace Garden, 3rd St.
Tel (044) 2833 4955.

Cane and Bamboo

20 Chin-C Rd, Ethiraj Lane.
Tel (044) 2827 5180

Higginbotham's

116 Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2841 3146.

Musee Musicals

67 Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2852 2780.

Music World

Spencer's Plaza.
Tel (044) 2849 3232

Naturally Auroville

40 Khader Nawaz Khan
Rd, Nungambakkam.
Tel (044) 2821 7517

Poompuhar

818 Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2852 0624

Sapthaswara Music Store

165 Royapetta H Rd,
Mylapore.
Tel (044) 2499 3294

VTI

New 80, Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2858 6779.

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

Kalakshetra

Kalakshetra Foundation,
Thiruvanniyur.
Tel (044) 2491 1844.

Karthik Fine Arts

New 39, Bhimanna
Garden St, Alwarpet.
Tel (044) 2499 7788

Museum Theatre

Pantheon Rd, Egmore.
Tel (044) 2819 3778

Music Academy

306 TTK Rd, Alwarpet.
Tel (044) 2811 5162

Narada Gana Sabha

114 TTK Rd, Alwarpet.
Tel (044) 2499 3201

Sri Krishna Gana Sabha

8 Maharajapuram
Santhanam Salai,
T Nagar.
Tel (044) 2814 0806

CINEMA

Devi

47 Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2855 5660

Ega

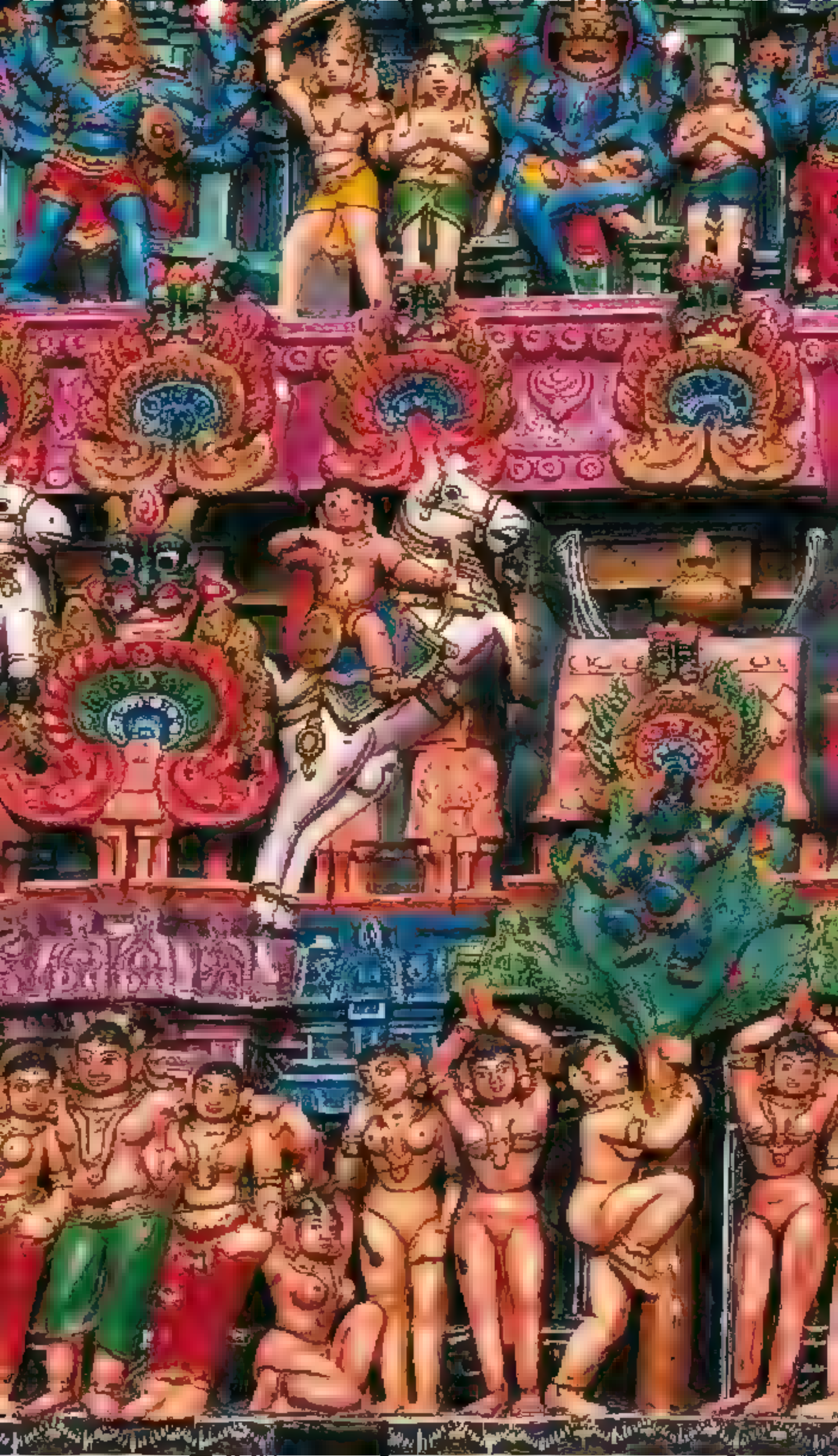
435 Poonamallee High Rd.
Tel (044) 2641 1666

Gaiety

Anna Salai.
Tel (044) 2841 5154

Sathyam Cineplex

Sathyam Theatre Complex,
8, Thiru. Vi Ka Rd.
Tel (044) 2852 3813



TAMIL NADU

The cradle of ancient Dravidian culture, Tamil Nadu extends from the Coromander Coast in the east to the forested Western Ghats in the west. At its heart is the fertile Kaveri valley, a land of rice fields and spectacular temples. This is the site of ancient Chola mandalam where the Chola kings built magnificent temples at Thanjavur and elsewhere. Great temples also stand at Madurai and Chidambaram, which wit-

nessed an efflorescence of dance, music and literature under their enlightened rulers. The 7th century port city of Mamallapuram with its spectacular rock-cut temples is now a World Heritage Site, while the former French enclave of Pondicherry and British forts and churches reflect the state's colonial history. Many towns in Tamil Nadu have the prefix "Tiru", which means sacred, and indicates the presence of a major religious site.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

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Dakshina Chitra ❶

Chingleput district, 26 km (16 miles) S of Chennai. 📞 Tel (04114) 272 603. 🗓️ Wed–Mon. 📺 📷 📱 📺

This heritage village, on the Coromandel Coast, provides a fascinating glimpse into the homes and lifestyles of the people of South India. The village features reconstructions of traditional houses, including, so far, six from Tamil Nadu, three from Kerala and one from Karnataka. The handsome Chettiar mansion (see p612) on view, with its elaborately carved wooden door, reflects the wealth of the Chettiar merchant community, while the homes of priests, farmers, weavers and potters are simple, utilitarian yet elegant structures. Within the complex is an Ayyanar shrine (see p605) and an open courtyard, where folk and classical dance performances and craft demonstrations are held.

Environ

Cholamandal Village 12 km (7 miles), north of Dakshina Chitra, is an artists' village established in 1966 and the first of its kind in India. For nature lovers the **Crocodile Bank** founded by an American zoologist, Romulus Whitaker, is 15 km (9 miles) south of the village. It includes a snake farm and a cooperative of Irulas, a community of rat-catchers.

📍 Cholamandal Village

Tel (044) 2449 0092 🗓️ daily

📍 Crocodile Bank

🗓️ Wed–Mon 📺 📷 extra charges



A colourful sign announcing the entrance to the Crocodile Bank



The sculpted relief at Mamallapuram, depicting Bhagiratha's Penance

Mamallapuram ❷

Kanchipuram district, 58 km (36 miles) S of Chennai. 📞 Covelong Rd, (04114) 242 232 🗓️ daily 📺 📷 📱 📺 Dance Festival (Jan/Feb)

The Unesco World Heritage site of Mamallapuram (or Mahabalipuram) was once a major port-city, built in the 7th century by the Pallava king, Narasimha Varman I,

also known as Mamalla, the "Great Wrestler". This spectacular site, situated on the Bay of Bengal, extends across a boulder-strewn landscape and comprises rock-cut caves and monolithic shrines (see pp587–81),

structural temples and huge bas-reliefs that are considered the greatest examples of Pallava art. The stone-carving tradition that created these wonders is still alive in the many workshops scattered around the village.

The spectacular **Shore Temple**, perched dramatically on a promontory by the sea, has survived the ravages of time and erosion. It was built by Mamalla for Vishnu, while the two Shiva shrines were added by Mamalla's successor Narasimha Varman II. The temple has a low boundary wall, with rows of seated Nandis surrounding it. Placed inside are a reclining Vishnu, a 16-faceted polished linga and reliefs of Somaskanda – a composite form of Shiva with

his consort Parvati and sons, Skanda and Ganesha.

Inland from the Shore Temple, in the village centre, is the celebrated bas-relief **Bhagiratha's Penance**, also known as Arjuna's Penance or the Descent of the Ganges. Carved on an immense rock with a natural vertical cleft, symbolizing the Ganges, the panel depicts in great detail the story of the sacred river's

descent from the sky (see p163). This divine act, made possible by the penance of the sage Bhagiratha, is witnessed on the panel by celestial and semi-celestial beings, ascetics and animals. The symbolism is best understood during the monsoon, when rainwater flows

down the cleft and collects in the tank below. Nearby are the unfinished **Panch Pandava Cave Temple**, and **Krishna's Butter Ball** – a natural boulder perched precariously on a slope.

South of Bhagiratha's Penance is the **Krishna Mandapa**, a huge bas-relief showing the god lifting Mount Govardhan to protect the people from torrential rains, as well as performing his tasks as a cowherd. The **Olakkanatha Temple**, above the *mandapa*, was once used as a lighthouse.

On the ridge southwest of Bhagiratha's Penance are three cave temples. The **Mahishasuramardini Cave**



Krishna's Butter Ball, a natural boulder

Temple has a graceful portrayal of Goddess Durga on her lion mount, subduing the buffalo-headed demon Mahisha, on the northern wall. This panel seems to emanate life and motion in contrast to the one on the southern wall, where Vishnu reclines in deep meditation before creating the earth.

Nearby, the **Adivaraha Cave Temple** has interesting panels of Pallava rulers with their consorts. The Lion Throne, on top of a hill further west, is a raised platform with a seated lion, discovered near the piles of brick rubble thought to be the remains of the palace of the Pallavas.

The **Trimurti Cave Temple**, northwest of Bhagiratha's Penance, is dedicated to three gods – Shiva, Vishnu and Somaskanda. The shrines are guarded by statues of graceful doorkeepers. A sculpture of Durga standing on Mahisha's head is on an outer wall. To its south, the **Varaha Cave Temple** has beautifully moulded lion pillars, while the relief sculptures of Lakshmi, Durga

and Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu, are among the masterpieces of Pallava art. The two-storeyed, rectangular **Ganesha Ratha**, further south, is attributed to Parameshvara Varman I (c.669–90). The temple, originally dedicated to Shiva, has beautifully carved inscriptions listing the royal titles of Parameshvara Varman.

A small **Archaeological Museum**, with sculptures and fragments excavated from the site, lies to its east.

Archaeological Museum

West Raja St.  daily  **Shore Temple**  also covers Panch Rathas.

Environs

The **Tiger's Cave**, 4 km (2.5 miles) north, is a shallow cave framed by a large boulder, with heads of *yalis* (mythical leonine beasts). It was probably a stage for outdoor performances.

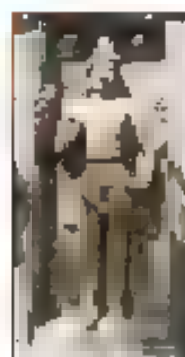
The Vedagirisvara Temple, dedicated to Shiva, at the top of a hill in the village of **Thirukkazhukunran**, 17 km (11 miles) west, is famous for the two eagles that swoop down at noon to be fed by the temple priests. According to legend, these birds are saints who fly from Varanasi (see pp.202–208), to Rameshvaram, stopping here to rest.



Fishermen with their boats on the beach at Mamallapuram



Mamallapuram: Panch Rathas



Sculpture of
Subramanya

This 7th-century complex of monolithic rock-cut shrines called the Panch (five) Rathas (processional temple chariots) is named after the five Pandava brothers, heroes of the epic *Mahabharata* (see p26), and their queen Draupadi. Although unfinished, these impressive temples are a tribute to the genius of the stone-cutters who carved these large boulders *in situ*. In an ambitious experiment, the styles and techniques of wooden architecture were imitated in stone, to create a variety of forms that later came to influence South Indian temple design.



Arjuna Ratha, Draupadi Ratha and Nandi

Arjuna Ratha

This two-storeyed temple has a graceful portrayal of Shiva leaning on his mount the bull Nandi. Royal couples and other elegantly carved figures in the niches embellish the outer walls.



Nandi, carved out of a single rock, faces the Arjuna Ratha.



★ Durga Panel

A four-armed Durga is carved on the rear wall of the Draupadi Ratha's sanctum, with kneeling devotees in front. One of these is shown in the process of cutting his head off as a supreme act of self sacrifice.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Durga Panel
- ★ Standing Lion
- ★ Har hara

Draupadi Ratha a stone replica of a thatched ratha shrine is the smallest ratha of the group, and is dedicated to the goddess Durga.

★ Standing Lion

The mount of Durga is placed in front of the Draupadi Ratha.



King Narasimha

The Pallava king Narasimha Varman I, the patron of this complex and after whose title, Mamalla the site is named, is shown wearing a crown, a silk garment and jewellery

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

1.5 km (1 mile) S of Mamallapuram village ☐ daily ☒
 Tamil Nadu Tourism,
 Coverlong Rd, 04 14 242 232

Dharmaraja Ratha, an imposing three-storeyed ratha is crowned by an octagonal domed roof. Sculpted panels are carved on the upper storeys



Bhima Ratha, a gigantic rectangular ratha with a barrel-vaulted roof and unfinished lower level, is named after the Pandava brother famed for his strength

★ Harihara

Niche figures on the lower level include beautiful sculptures of Harihara, a composite form of Vishnu and Shiva (see p47). The right side of the body, with matted locks of hair is Shiva, and the left is Vishnu, with a smooth, tapering cylindrical crown

Nakul Sahdeva Ratha

Named jointly after the Pandava twins, this ratha is unique for its apsidal form, known in architectural terms as garaprishta (back of an elephant). As if to emphasize this, a perfectly sculpted elephant, carved from a single stone, stands next to it





Vaishnavite priests, Varadaraja Temple

Kanchipuram ③

Kanchipuram district 76 km (47 miles) SW of Chennai 153 000
 📍 🏨 🍽️ Hotel Tamil Nadu, 78, Kamakshi Amman Sannathi St. (04112) 222 552 📅 *Shivratri* (Feb/Mar), *Panguni Uthiram Festival* (Mar/Apr), *Brahmotsava* (May/Jun).

The small temple town of Kanchipuram, or Kanchi, as it is popularly known, is one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus. From the 6th to the 8th centuries it was the capital of the Pallavas (see p578), who built numerous temples here and founded universities for higher learning. Royal patronage from the succeeding Chola, Pandya, and Vijayanagar dynasties further consolidated the city's reputation as a religious and commercial centre.

Kanchipuram is sacred to Shaivites (devotees of Shiva) as well as to Vaishnavites (worshippers of Vishnu). The town is thus divided into two distinct zones, with the Shaivite temples to the north and the Vaishnavite temples to the southeast.

It also has an important Devi (goddess) temple, the **Kamakshi Temple**, situated northeast of the bus stand. Dedicated to Kamakshi, or the "loving-eyed" Parvati, the temple was rebuilt in the 14th century, during the Vijayanagar period. It has four colourful *gopuras* and the main sanctum

has a gold-plated roof. The **Kailasanatha Temple** to the west of the bus stand, is the oldest and grandest structure in the town. Built in the early 8th century by Rajasimha, the last great Pallava king, this Shiva temple is surrounded by 58 smaller shrines, each with splendid carvings of the various representations of Shiva. The recently discovered frescoes here are the earliest in South India. The sanctum has a circumambulatory passage with great symbolic meaning – seven steps (indicating seven births) lead to a dark passage

(indicating the journey of life) and a narrow outlet (indicating death).

The great **Ekambareswara Temple** on Car Street (constructed originally by the Pallavas, has a 16-pillared *maulapa* in front of it, that was added later by the Vijayanagar kings. This is one of the five *panchalinga* shrines (see p584) and houses a linga made of earth (*prithvi*). Legend says that the goddess Kamakshi, as part of her penance for disturbing Shiva's meditation, created this linga with earth taken from under a mango tree. Lingas abound in the corridors of the temple complex, while on the western side of the shrine stands the sacred mango tree, said to be 3,000 years old. The **Vaikuntha Perumal Temple** near the railway station, is one of the 18

temples dedicated to Vishnu. Erected by the Pallava king Nandi Varman II (r 731–96), this unique structure has three main sanctums, built one on top of the other. Each of them enshrines an image of Vishnu in a different form – standing, sitting and reclining. The hall in the lower shrine has panels depicting the genealogy, coronations and martial conquests of the Pallava kings.

The **Varadaraja Temple**, on Gandhi Road, is the town's main Vishnu temple. The chief deity is a form of Vishnu known as Varadaraja (the "King who Bestows Benediction"). It is believed that the temple stands on the site where Brahma performed a *yagna* (sacrifice) to invoke Vishnu's presence. Among the temple's jewels is a valuable gold necklace, said to have been presented by Robert Clive (see p561).

Kanchipuram, famous for its silk, is also the seat of one of the four Shankara *mathas*. They belong to the lineage of head priests of the *matha* (religious centre), founded by the much-respected 9th-century philosopher-saint Adi Shankaracharya (see p648).

Environs

The bird sanctuary of **Vedanthangal**, 30 km (19 miles) southeast, attracts more than 30,000 migratory birds. Species such as cormorants, egrets, white ibis, and grey wagtails can be seen between October and February. The sanctuary has been looked after by locals for well over 250 years.



View of Kailasanatha, Kanchipuram's oldest temple

Kanchipuram Silk

Initially, Kanchipuram was a weaving and trade centre for cotton textiles. But from the 19th century, with the increase in availability of mulberry silk from neighbouring Karnataka the craftsmen turned entirely to silk weaving. Today the silk fabric and saris created by the



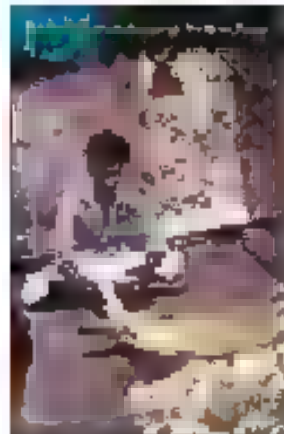
Kanchipuram sari patterns

city's weavers and dyers are ritually offered to the gods before being sold. Kanchipuram silks, an essential part of every Indian bride's trousseau, are renowned for their lustre and for their elegant combination of contrasting colours on the borders and end pieces (*pallavs*).

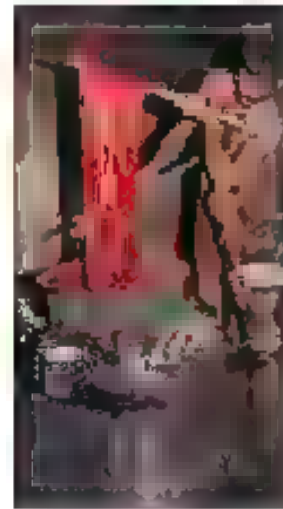


Cocoons of the silkworm

Bombyx mori are reared on bamboo frames before being dropped into boiling water to preserve the length of the fibre.



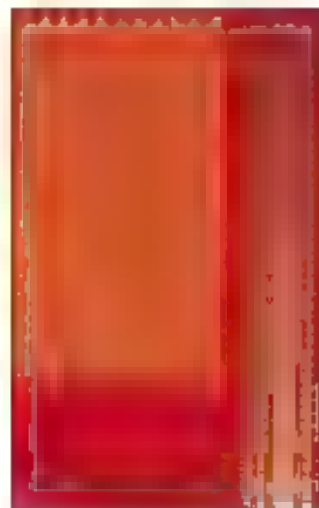
Yarn being sorted and graded before dyeing



Dyeing is done by a special community which is skilled in this technique. The dyer first dips the yarn into a cauldron of colour and then dries the hanks in the sun.



Warp and weft yarns are prepared by family members. More than 5,000 families are involved in this very lucrative handloom industry.



Classic Kanchipuram saris are woven from twisted yarn which makes them extremely durable. They are embellished with motifs such as temple gopurams, holy rudraksha beads, lotus flowers and peacocks. Often, woven in gold threads.



Weavers' dwellings are simple structures built around a courtyard and serve as both a home and a workplace. The loom is the main feature and occupies a large portion of the living area. Weaving skills are passed from generation to generation within families.

Vellore ❶

Vellore district, 145 km (90 miles) W of Chennai. ☎ 177 500 📶
Katpadi, 5 km (3 miles) N of town centre, then bus or auto. 🚏 🚏 daily

Surrounded by a deep artificial moat, the 16th-century **Vellore Fort** dominates the heart of this town. An impressive example of military architecture, the fort has a turbulent history. This formidable structure has withstood many battles, including an ill-fated mutiny led by the son of Tipu Sultan (see p517) in 1806 against the British East India Company. Today, part of the fort houses some government offices, including the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), district courts and a prison. A museum within has a small but good collection of historical objects found in the area.

The only major structure to survive in the fort is the magnificent **Jalakanteshvara Temple**, constructed by the Nayakas, governors of the region under the Vijayanagar kings, in the mid-16th century. This Shiva temple is located near the fort's northern wall. It is surrounded by a low-lying boundary wall, and contains a tank and subsidiary shrines. In the early 20th century, the temple was used as a garrison and its linga was removed from the sanctum. This was reinstated



The broad moat surrounding the quadrangular Vellore Fort

in 1981, after which worship recommenced. In the outer courtyard is the ornate **Kalyana Mandapa**. Its pillars are carved with magnificent horses and palanquins.

Vellore is renowned for its prestigious Christian Medical College, set up in 1900 by the American Dr Ida Scudder. This institution specializes in research on tropical diseases.

🏰 Vellore Fort

🕒 daily Museum 🕒 Sat–Thu.
🕒 2nd Sat of every month
Jalakanteshvara Temple 🕒 daily
📍 inside the sanctum.

Environs

Arcot, 27 km (17 miles) east of Vellore, is best known for its flamboyant nawabs (see p570), and their resistance to the British and French forces in the late 18th century. Some ancient tombs and a Jim Masjid are all that remain from that period.

Tiruvannamalai ❷

Tiruvannamalai district, 85 km (53 miles) S of Vellore. ☎ 📶
🕒 Karthigai Deepam (Nov/Dec).

One of the most sacred cities of Tamil Nadu, this pilgrim town is the place where Shiva is believed to have appeared as a column of fire (*Ishtavara linga*) in order to assert his supremacy over Brahma and Vishnu. Arunachala Hill, the "Red Mountain" which forms a backdrop to the town, is said to be the site where the fire manifested itself, and is thus perceived as the light of god himself. On the day of the Karthigai Deepam festival (see p589), an enormous *deepa* (lamp), using 2,000 litres (528 gallons) of ghee, and a 30-m (98-ft) wide, wick, is lit on the hill and burns for days. On a full moon night

THE FIVE ELEMENTAL LINGAS

Hindu belief holds that five essential elements – air, water, fire, earth and ether – created man and the universe. Shiva, one of the three main gods of the Hindu Trinity, is represented as the embodiment of these five elements in five different places. At Sri Kalahasti, in Andhra Pradesh (see p680), he is represented as air, in Tiruvanaikka (see p603) he takes the form of water, so the linga (phallic symbol) in the main sanctum is partly

immersed in water. At Tiruvannamalai, Shiva represents fire, while in the Ekampareswara Temple at Kanchipuram (see p582), the linga is made of earth. Finally, at Chidambaram (see p590), Shiva represents ether, the most sacred of the five elements.



Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram, housing the ether linga



The 16th-century Arunachaleswara Temple at Tiruvannamalai

pilgrims perform a 14-km (9-mile) long circumambulation on foot around the hill.

Arunachaleshvara

Temple, the town's most important structure, is one of the five elemental shrines of Shiva, where the Linga, encased in gold, represents fire. Covering a vast area of 10 ha (25 acres), this is also one of the largest temple complexes in India, parts of it dating to the 11th century. It has nine imposing towers, huge *prakaras* (walled and cloistered enclosures), the large Shivaganga Tank and a vast thousand-pillared hall.

Tiruvannamalai is also where Sri Ramana Maharishi, the famed 20th-century saint, spent 23 years in meditation. The **Sri Ramana Maharishi Ashram** near Arunachala Hill, is an internationally renowned spiritual centre that attracts devotees from all walks of life.

Arunachaleshvara Temple

☐ daily ☑ to non-Hindus
✂ inside the sanctum



Kalyana Mahal with Rajagiri Hill in the background, Gingee

Gingee Fort ⑥

Viluppuram district, 37 km (23 miles) E of Tiruvannamalai. ☐ daily ☑

Gingee (locally called Senn Fort), is a remarkable example of military engineering. Its three citadels, dramatically perched atop three hills – Krishnagiri to the north, Rajagiri to the west and Chandrayandurg to the south-



The Krishna Temple and Durbar Hall on Krishnagiri Hill, Gingee Fort

east – are enclosed by solid stone walls to form a vast triangular-shaped area extending more than 1.5 km (1 mile) from north to south.

Built by the local Nayaka governors, feudatories of the Vijayanagar kings, in the 15th and 16th centuries, the fort was occupied by Bijapur's Adil Shahi Sultans (see p542), the Marathas (see p471), the French and finally the British.

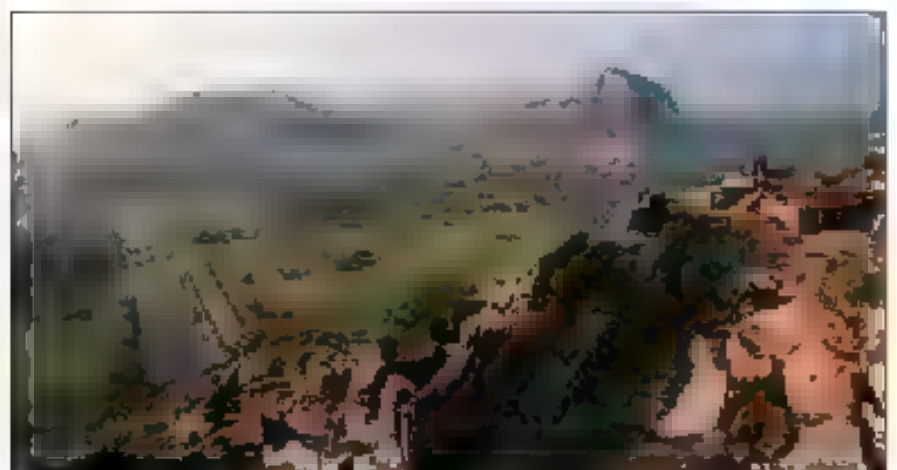
This once-great fortress city is dotted with dilapidated arcaded chambers, mosques, *mandapas*, small shrines, tanks and granaries. Many temples, mostly dedicated to Vishnu, survive as well. These include the deserted temple in the main citadel on the 242-m (794-ft) high Rajagiri Hill. The most prominent, however, is the great **Venkataramana Temple**, in the foothills of the outer fort near Pondicherry Gate. This was constructed by Mutala Nayaka in the 17th century. Its original pillars were removed by the French and used in the Government Square at Pondicherry (see p586). Near the gateway are

panels depicting scenes from the *Ramayana* (see p27) and the *Vishnu Purana*.

A Ranganatha Temple and a Krishna Temple, both smaller than the Venkataramana Temple, are located on Krishnagiri Hill, as is the **Durbar Hall**. The Durbar Hall has balconies extending to the edge of the hill which provide good views of the surrounding countryside.

The fort's finest monument is the **Kalyana Mahal**, a square hall built for the ladies of the court. The building has a central eight-storeyed pyramidal tower with a single large room on each floor.

There are also traces of a network of natural springs and tanks that provided an excellent supply of water to the citadel. One of the tanks, Chettikulam, has a platform where Raja Thei Singh, a courageous 18th-century Rajput chief and vassal of the Mughal emperor, was cremated. Tamil folk songs glorify Gingee and Raja Thei Singh, who was killed in a heroic battle against the Nawab of Arcot.



Gingee Fort sprawling across three hills

Street-by-Street: Pondicherry

The former capital of French territories in India Pondicherry was established in 1674 by François Martin, the first director of the French East India Company. The town is laid out in a grid pattern, with parallel streets cutting across each other at right angles. Its main promenade, the 3-km (2-mile) long Goubert Salai running along the Bay of Bengal, formed part of the French Quarter, with its elegant colonial mansions, tree-lined boulevards, parks, bars and cafés. Beyond this was a canal, now dry, that demarcated the Tamil Town, where the local populace once lived.



Statue of Jeanne d'Arc



Government Square
A pavilion stands in the centre of this tree-lined square

A Statue of Mahatma Gandhi 4 m (13 ft) high, stands on a pedestal surrounded by eight stone pillars.



★ **Church of Our Lady of the Angels**
Built in 1865, this striking church boasts a rare oil painting of Our Lady of the Assumption, a gift from the French emperor, Napoleon III

Le Café, a popular restaurant on Goubert Salai.

JOSEPH FRANÇOIS DUPLEIX

Pondicherry's colonial past is intricately interwoven with the life of the redoubtable Marquis Joseph François Dupleix, governor between 1742 and 1754. This energetic statesman tried valiantly to prevent British supremacy by forming alliances with local princes. This power struggle was aggravated by the War of Austrian Succession in Europe between England and France. With the final defeat of the French in the Second Carnatic War, Dupleix relinquished his governorship and returned in disgrace to Paris. His memorial statue is on Goubert Salai.



Dupleix
(1697–1764)

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Church of Our Lady of the Angels
- ★ Aurobindo Ashram
- ★ View of the Seafront



Raj Nivas

A harmonious fusion of French and Indian styles of architecture, Duplex's palatial home is now the Lieutenant Governor's official residence

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Union Territory of Pondicherry
160 km (99 miles) S of Chennai
☎ 220.800 📠 📺 📺
Pondicherry Tourism, Goubert
Salai, (0413) 233 9497 📠
📠 Mon-Sat 📠 Masimagam
(Feb/Mar), Ganesha Chaturthi
(Aug/Sep).

0 metres 80
0 yards 80

General Hospital

Manakula Vinayakar Temple

Dedicated to Ganesha, this temple has a golden spire and walls portraying 40 different forms of Ganesha



KEY

--- Suggested route



★ Aurobindo Ashram

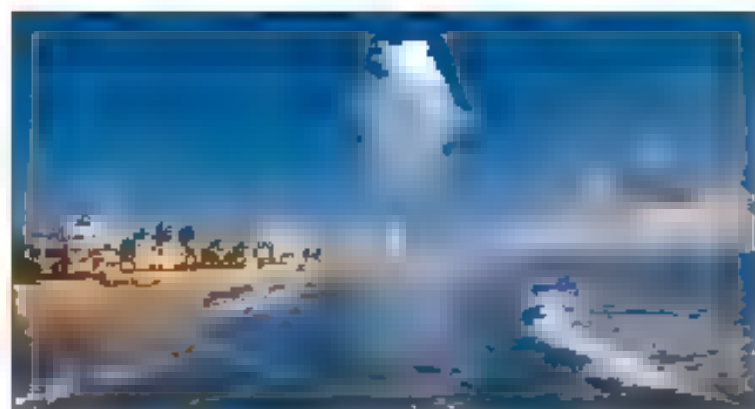
Named after Sri Aurobindo (see p588), this serene ashram organizes regular meditation sessions to which all are welcome

Pondicherry

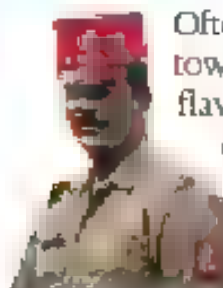
Museum's collection ranges from ancient Roman artefacts and Chola bronzes to beautiful snail shells.

★ View of the Seafront

Goubert Salai, the boulevard along the Bay of Bengal, is lined with grand colonial buildings



Exploring Pondicherry



A policeman wearing a kepi

Often described as a sleepy French provincial town, Pondicherry retains a distinct Gallic flavour. French is still spoken among the older residents, while stately colonial mansions stand in tree-lined streets that are still known by their colonial names. Even the policemen continue to wear the military-style caps, known as kepis. Today, Pondicherry, has been renamed Puduchcheri. Located on the east coast

of Tamil Nadu, it is the administrative capital of a Union Territory that includes the former French enclaves of Mahe in Kerala (see p655), Yanam in Andhra Pradesh and Karaikkal in Tamil Nadu

III Pondicherry Museum

49 Rue St Louis Tel Director Art & Culture (0413) 233 6236. ☐

Tue-Sun

Located in the lovely old Law Building, near Government Park, the Pondicherry Museum has an outstanding collection of artifacts from the French colonial period. The rooms in one section are furnished in French style, and are decorated with marble statuary, paintings, mirrors and clocks. Prized exhibits include the bed that Dupleix slept in when he was the governor, and a *poisse-poisse*, an earlier version of the rickshaw.

The museum also displays rare bronzes and stone sculptures from the Palava and Chola periods. Among the artifacts excavated from nearby Arikamedu, an ancient port that had trade links with Imperial Rome, are beads, amphorae, coins, ornamented oil lamps, funerary urns and fragments of pottery and china.

Inside the same compound is the **Romain Rolland Library**. Established in 1872, the library now has a rich collection of more than 300,000 volumes including many rare editions in both French and English. Its mobile library service takes more than 8,000 books in a bus to nearby villages. The ref-

erence section, on the second floor, is open to the public.

☞ Romain Rolland Library

Tel (0413) 233 6426. ☐ Mon-Sat



Stained glass, Church of the Sacred Heart

☞ Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

South Boulevard

☐ daily

A serene atmosphere cloaks this brown and white Neo-Gothic church, built in the 1700s. Its most interesting features are its large stained-glass panels depicting incidents from the life of Jesus Christ, and the handsome arches that span the nave. Further along the southern boulevard is the cemetery,

which has tombs with ornate marble decorations.

☛ Botanical Gardens

S of City Bus Stand. ☐

Lying at the far western end of the old Tamil Town, the Botanical Gardens, and out in 1826, were designed in the formal French style with clipped trees, flower beds, gravel walks and fountains. The French introduced many unusual and exotic trees and shrubs from all over India and the world, many of which are still here. With its 1,500 species of plants, this is one of the best botanical gardens in South India. An interesting little aquarium displays some of the more spectacular marine species from the Coromandel Coast.

☞ House of Ananda Rangapillai

Ananda Rangapillai St. Tel (0413) 233 5756 for permission to visit

This lavishly furnished house, once the home of an 18th-century Indian nobleman, offers fascinating glimpses into a vanished lifestyle. Now a museum, the house was owned by Ananda Rangapillai, Dupleix's favourite courier and *dubash* (trade agent). A perceptive observer and commentator, he maintained a series of diaries between 1736 and 1760, recording his views of the fluctuating fortunes of the French in India. However, he displeased Madame Dupleix, who eventually ousted him from his post.

SRI AUROBINDO GHOSE

The firebrand Bengali poet, philosopher, Aurobindo Ghose, who joined the struggle for freedom in the early 1900s, was known for his extremist views. To escape from the British, he took refuge in the French territory of Pondicherry, where he was drawn into the spiritual realm. It was here that he studied, wrote about and popularized the principles of yoga. His disciple, Mira Alfassa, known later as "The Mother", was a Parisian mystic, painter and musician, who first came to Pondicherry with her husband during World War I. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy so inspired her that she stayed on, and was later instrumental in the establishment of the Aurobindo Ashram.



Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)



The verdant courtyard of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient

☞ École Française d'Extrême-Orient

16 & 19, Rue Dumas **Tel** (0413) 233 2504

An internationally renowned research institution, the 19th-century École Française d'Extrême-Orient is noted for its research in archaeology, history and sociology.

☞ French Institute of Indology

11 St Louis St **Tel** (0413) 233 4539

The prestigious French Institute of Indology was established in the mid-1950s by an eminent French Indologist, Dr Jean Filozet. Originally set up for the study of local language and culture, this institute now has links with many French universities and research organizations.

☞ Aurobindo Ashram

Rue de la Marine **Tel** (0413) 223 3604 ☐ daily

Pondicherry's best-known landmark, the Aurobindo

Ashram dominates life in this town. Founded by Sri Aurobindo in 1926, the Ashram is a peaceful retreat with tree-shaded courtyards. The flower-festooned *samaadhi* (memorial) of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother lies under a frangipani tree in the main courtyard. This memorial, with two chambers, one above the other, is the focal point for all disciples and followers.

Environ

Auroville or the "City of Dawn", 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Pondicherry, was designed by French architect Roger Anger in 1968. Conceived as a utopian paradise by The Mother, Mirra Alfassa, it was planned as a futuristic international city, where people of goodwill would live together in peace. The International Commune, with 40 settlements with names like Grace, Serenity and Certitude

and 550 permanent residents, was meant to bring people from different castes, religions and nations under one roof where they could live in harmony. Two important settlements, Fraternité and Harmonie, sell handicrafts made by local artisans. The Matri Mandir, a meditation centre set in an area of 25 ha (62 acres) reflects The Mother's spiritual beliefs. This spherical marble chamber has a crystal placed inside it reflecting the sun's rays. The concentrated light acts as a focal point to aid meditation.



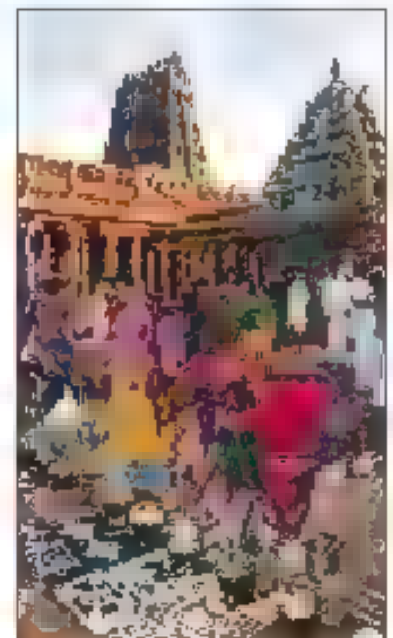
Matri Mandir, the spiritual and physical centre of Auroville

FESTIVALS OF TAMIL NADU

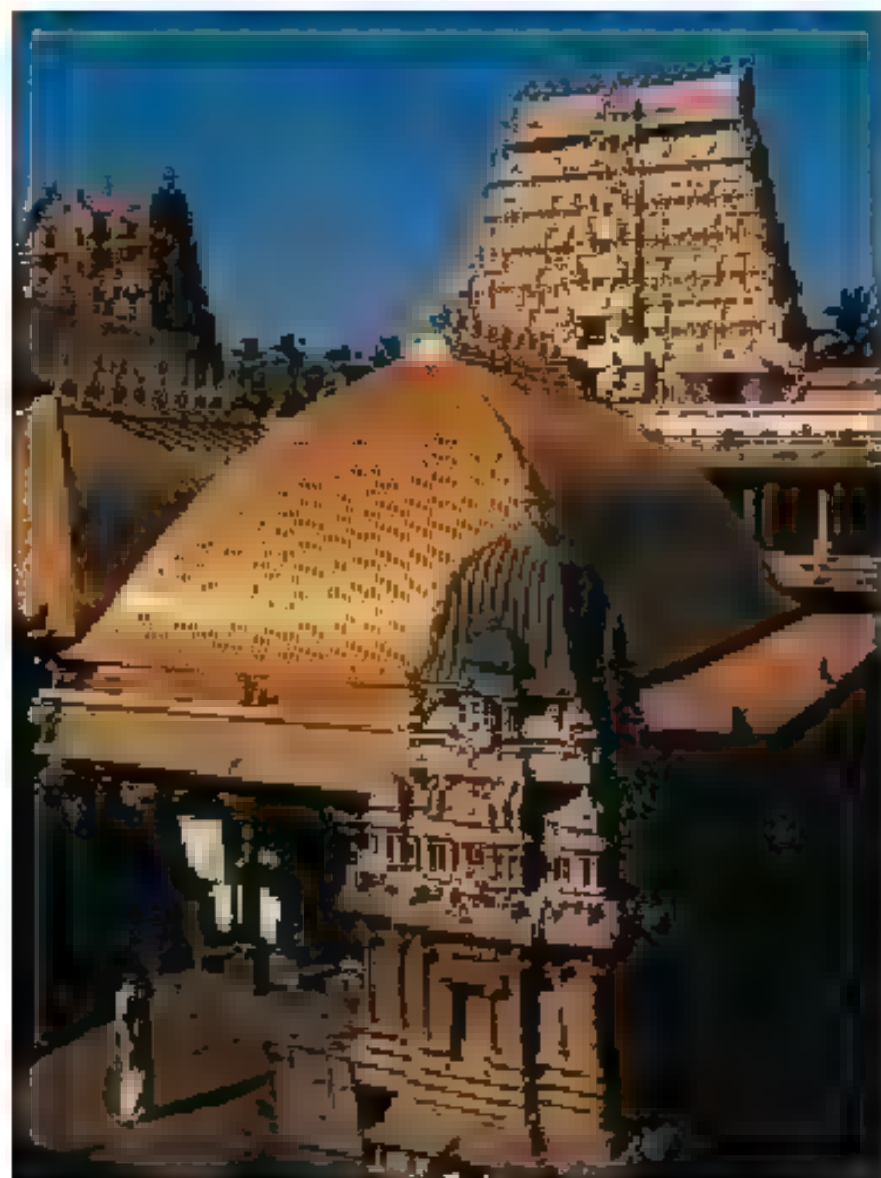
Pongal (*mid-Jan*). A thanksgiving festival in praise of the sun, land and cattle, Pongal is celebrated all over Tamil Nadu. A sweet rice pudding (*pongal*) is the main offering. The southern districts organize a bull fight, a popular martial event known as *manju virattal*. **Chitirai** (*mid-Apr*). The Tamil New Year is celebrated all over the state with offerings of food to the gods. In Madurai, the marriage of Minakshi (Parvati) and Sundar

eshvara (Shiva) is celebrated with much pomp. **Adi Perukku** (*Jul-Aug*). Sweets and different kinds of rice preparations are offered to the rivers of Tamil Nadu to mark the onset of the monsoon. **Navaratri Gollu** (*Sep/Oct*). Exclusively for women, this nine-day festival marks the victory of Goddess Durga over the buffalo demon Mahisha.

Houses are decorated with *gollu* dolls, which depict gods and goddesses, as well as with contemporary secular icons. **Karthigai** (*Nov-Dec*). Tiruvannamalai. People decorate their homes with lights to celebrate the birth of Murugan, son of Shiva (*see p584*).



Tamil women making preparations for Pongal



The gold-plated roof of the main sanctum, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram

Chidambaram

Thanjavur district 60 km (37 miles) S of Pondicherry 59,000

Hotel Tamil Nadu, Railway Feeder Rd, (04144) 238 739 Dance Festival (Feb/Mar), Arudhra (Dec/Jan),

Sacred Chidambaram, where Shiva is believed to have performed his cosmic dance the *tandava nritya*, is a traditional temple town where history merges with mythology to create a deeply religious ambience. All ancient Hindu beliefs and practices are zealously observed here, manifested in an endless cycle of rites and rituals.

The focal point of the town is the awe-inspiring **Nataraja Temple**, built by the Cholas (see pp46–7) in the 9th century to honour their patron deity, Shiva as Nataraja, the “Lord of Dance” (see p166). The temple has an unusual hut-like sanctum with a gold-plated roof, the huge, colonnaded Shiva-ganga Tank, and four colourful *gopuras*. The most interesting is the eastern *gopura* which

features detailed sculptures of the 108 hand and feet movements of Bharat Natyam (see p29), and is considered a veritable encyclopaedia of this classical temple dance.

Within the temple's three enormous enclosures are five major halls (*sabhas*), each conceived for a special purpose. In the outer enclosure next to the Shiva-ganga Tank, is the Raja Sabha (“Royal Hall”), a beautiful, thousand-pillared hall, built as a venue for temple rituals and festivals. Many Chola kings were crowned here in the presence of the deity. In the central enclosure is the Deva Sabha (“Divine Hall”) where the temple bronzes are housed, and administrative functions performed. The adjacent Nritya Sabha (“Dance Hall”) has a superb collection of sculptures, the finest being the **Urdhava Tandava**. The



Urdhava Tandava, Nataraja Temple

innermost enclosure, the holiest part of the complex, contains the Chit Sabha or Chitambalam (“Hall of Bliss”) from which the town derives its name. This is the main sanctum, housing one of the five elemental lingas of Shiva (see p584), the *akasha* linga, which represents ether, the all-pervading element central to human existence. The inner sanctum containing the linga is hidden behind a black curtain, symbolizing ignorance, which is removed only during prayer time. There is a certain aura of mystery to this veiled sanctum and it is often called the Sacred Secret of Chidambaram (Chidambaram Rahasyam). Finally, the fifth hall, in front of the Chit Sabha, is the Kanaka Sabha (“Golden Hall”) where Shiva is supposed to have performed his cosmic dance.

Other areas of interest in the complex are the **Govindarajaswamy Shrine**, housing the reclining Vishnu, the **Shivakamasundari Shrine** dedicated to Shiva's consort Parvati, and the **Subramanyam Shrine**, in which Murugan is worshipped.

Religious traditions in the temple are preserved by a group of hereditary priests whose ancestors came to

Chidambaram 3,000 years ago. Known as the *dikshitaras*, they are easily recognized by their top-knots. Chidambaram's other claim to fame is the modern **Annamalai University**, which is located to the east. Founded by a philanthropist over 50 years ago, it is Tamil Nadu's first residential university, specializing in South Indian studies.

Nataraja Temple

Near bus stand daily

Environs

Located 16 km (10 miles) east of Chidambaram, **Pichavaram's** maze of picturesque backwaters, with mangrove forests and 1,700 islands in 4,000 canals, can be explored in rowboats.

Coromandel Driving Tour 9

Named after Chola mandalam ("the Realm of the Cholas"), the Coromandel Coast extends from the Godavari Delta in Andhra Pradesh in the north, to Point Calimere in the south. This spectacularly beautiful strip of land played a significant role in the maritime history of India. Its great ports have, through the ages, attracted traders and merchants in search of textiles and spices.



Dansborg Fort at Tarangambadi

Tirumullaivasal ①

A magnificent shrine to Shiva dominates this small coastal town.

0 km 10
0 miles 10

Tarangambadi ③

More popularly known as Tranquebar, this little town was a Danish settlement in the 17th century. It has an impressive fort, churches and a beautiful brick gateway, the Town Gate.



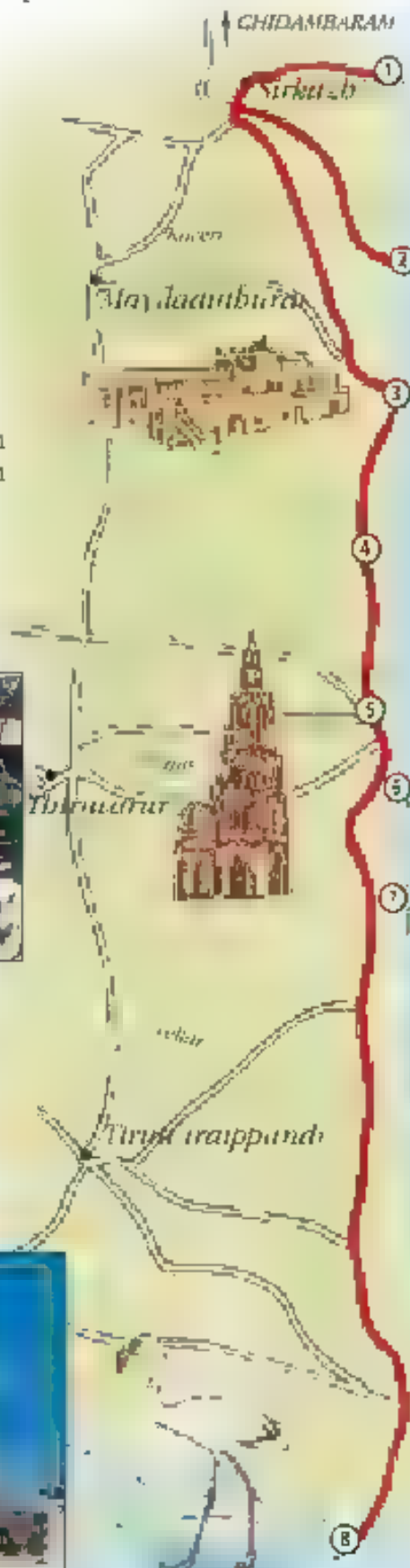
Nagapattinam ⑥

An old Chola port, this was also a major Buddhist centre till the 13th century. It was later occupied by the Portuguese, the Dutch and finally the British.



Velanganni ⑦

People of all religions seek cures at the Neo-Gothic Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health.



Poompuhar ②

This historic port city once had trade links with ancient Greece and Rome. An interesting museum here recreates stories of its past glory in bas-reliefs.

KEY

Tour route

Other roads

City of Bengal

Karaikal ④

This former French town has many 19th-century mansions and a Neo-Gothic church.



Nagore ⑤

The 16th-century tomb of Hazrat Sayyid Shahu, a Muslim saint who died in Nagore, attracts devotees of all religions, castes and creeds.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: 90 km (56 miles)

Stopping-off points: Hotel Tamil Nadu at both Poompuhar and Nagapattinam are convenient stopping-off points. The route is well connected by government and private buses.

Point Calimere ⑧

This wildlife sanctuary spreads over 20,000 ha (49,421 acres) of saline marshland and is a haven for migratory birds.



The superb Nataraja sculpture at Gangaikondacholapuram

Gangaikondacholapuram 10

Tiruchirappalli district, 40 km (25 miles) SW of Chidambaram. from Chidambaram or Kumbakonam

Grandly titled Gangaikondacholapuram, "The City of the Chola who Took the Ganges", this now modest village was the capital of the powerful Chola dynasty (see pp46–7) during the reign of Rajendra I (r 1012–44). A great military commander like his father Rajaraja I, Rajendra I was the first Tamil ruler to venture northwards. He built this city to commemorate his successful campaign across the Ganges. According to an inscription, he then ordered the defeated rulers to carry back pots of sacred Ganges water on their heads to fill the Chola-Ganga tank, a victory memorial.

Except for the magnificent **Brihadishvara Temple**, little remains of his capital city. Built as a replica of Thanjavur's Brihadishvara Temple (see pp598–9), the towered

sanctum of this granite Shiva temple is shorter than the one at Thanjavur. Adorning the lower walls, columns and niches are many remarkable sculptures, friezes. One of the most outstanding is the panel depicting Shiva blessing Chandesha, a pious devotee sculpted to resemble Rajendra I himself. The sculptures of the *dikpatas* (guardians of the eight directions), *ekadasas* (the 11 forms of Shiva), Saraswati, Kalyanasundara and Nataraja (see p566) are also splendid examples of Chola art. Steps near the small Durga shrine in the courtyard

lead past a sculpture of a seated lion to a well believed to have been filled with Ganges water for daily rituals.

The small **Archaeological Museum** near the temple exhibits Chola artifacts from neighbouring sites.

Brihadishvara Temple
 daily **Museum** Sat–Thu.

Kumbakonam 11

Thanjavur district, 74 km (46 miles) SW of Chidambaram. 140, 100
 Thanjavur tourist office (04362) 231 325 **Nageshvara Temple Festival** (Apr/May), **Mahamaham Festival** (every 12 years)

Like Kanchipuram (see p582), Kumbakonam is one of the most sacred cities in Tamil Nadu. Located on the southern bank of the Kaveri river, this is an ancient city where, as legend says, Shiva's arrow shattered the cosmic pot (*kumbh*) containing the divine nectar of creation (*amrita*). This myth has given Kumbakonam both its name and sanctity. Today the city represents the traditional cultural values of the Tamil heartland. It is also the region's main commercial and craft centre, famous for its textiles, jewellery, bronze casting and the superior quality of its locally grown betel leaves.

It is believed that when the divine nectar emerged from the pot, it filled the huge **Mahamaham Tank**. This is Kumbakonam's sacred centre and the site of the great Mahamaham Festival, held every 12 years (the last one was held in 2004). At the



The 17th-century Adikumbheshvara Temple, Kumbakonam

auspicious time, thousands of devotees enter the tank for their holy dip. This is when the purifying power of the water is said to be at its height. The devout believe that all of India's nine sacred rivers (Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sarayu, Godavari, Narmada, Kaveri, Payokshini and Kanniyakumari) also bathe in the tank to cleanse themselves of the sins of humanity accumulated in their waters.

The tank, renovated by the Nayakas in the 17th century, has steps at the four cardinal points, and 16 ornate pavilions in honour of the 16 *mahadanas* (great gifts bestowed by a ruler on a spiritual centre). A fine example of Nayaka art is a relief depicting a king being weighed on a balance against gold (a ceremony known as *tukupurushadeva*), carved on the roof of a 16-piliated *mandapa* that stands at the northwest corner of the tank. To the north is the **Kashi-vishvanatha Temple**, which has a small shrine facing the water; this is dedicated to the nine sacred rivers, personified as goddesses. The shrine representing the Kaveri river occupies the central position.

To the east of the tank is the 17th-century **Adikumbheshvara Temple**, built on the legendary spot where Shiva shattered the pot. A unique feature here is the depiction of 27 stars and the 12 zodiac signs carved on a large block of stone in the Navaratri Mandapa. It also has a superb collection of silver *vahanas* (vehicles) which are used during festivals to carry the temple deities. The grand, 12-storeyed **Sarangapani Temple**, to the east, is the most important Vaishnavite shrine in the city.

Nearby is the 9th-century **Nageshvara Temple**, a fine example of early Chola architecture. The town's oldest temple, this is the site of an annual festival that celebrates the worship of the Linga by the sun. Niches on the sanctum walls contain exquisitely carved figures depicting the forms of Shiva, and scenes from the *Ramayana*.



Temple chariots at Kumbakonam's Adikumbheshvara Temple

Environ

The spectacular Aravateshvara Temple at **Darasuram**, 4 km (2.5 miles) west of Kumbakonam, was built by the Chola

king, Rajaraja II (r 1146–73). This temple is dedicated to Shiva, who is known here as Aravateshvara, the "Lord of Aravata." Legend claims that after Aravata, the white elephant of Indra, the God of the Heavens, regained his lost colour, he

worshipped Shiva at this spot. The four-tiered temple has a sanctum and three halls, of which the finest is the Raja-gambira Mandapa, conceived as a stone chariot drawn by caparisoned horses, with Brahma as its driver. The outer walls have fine friezes and carvings of musicians, dancers and acrobats as well as depictions from the *Periya Puranam*, a Tamil treatise on the 63 Shaivite poet-saints, the Nayannars (see p45).



Shiva's wedding procession, Darasuram

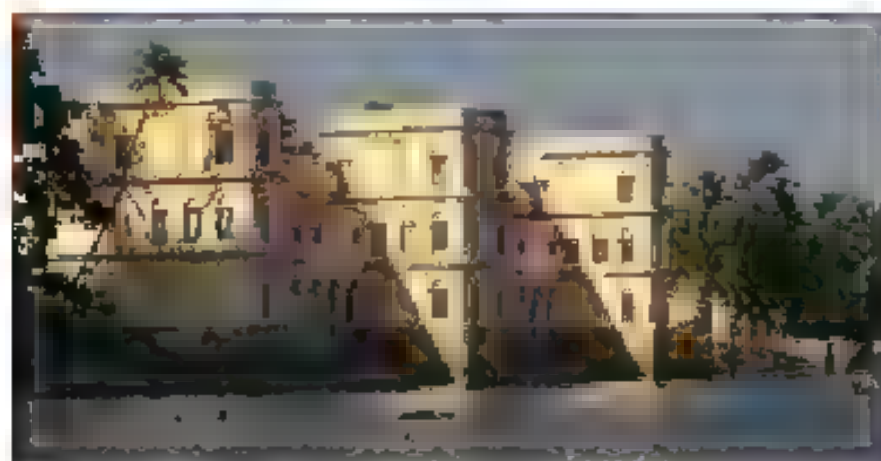
The late Chola temple at **Tirubhuvanam**, 8 km (5 miles) northeast of Kumbakonam, is dedicated to Kumbheshvara, the "God who

Removes Fear." This is also an old silk weaving centre. About 8 km (5 miles) west of Kumbakonam is **Swamimalai**, one of the six sacred shrines devoted to Lord Murugan (see p25), who, legend says, propounded the meaning of "Om

the sacred mantra, to his father Shiva, and thus assumed the title Swamimatha ("Lord of Lords"). The temple, situated on a hill, has an impressive statue of Murugan in the sanctum; interestingly, he has an elephant as his vehicle instead of the typical peacock. This small village is also an important centre for bronze casting, where artisans still use traditional methods to create beautiful images for temples (see p594).



Small votive shrines outside the Aravateshvara Temple, Darasuram



The College of Music at Tiruvaiyaru, on the Kaveri river

Tiruvaiyaru 12

Thanjavur district, 13 km (8 miles)

N of Thanjavur 14,500

Thyagaraja Music Festival (Jan.)

The fertile region watered by the Kaveri river and its four tributaries is known as *Tiruvaiyaru*, the sacred (*tiru*) land of five (*ai*) rivers (*aru*). For nearly 2,000 years the Tamil people have regarded the Kaveri as the sacred source of life, religion and culture. As a result, many scholars, artists, poets and musicians settled in this region, under the enlightened patronage of the rulers of Thanjavur (see pp596–7). Among them was Thyagaraja (1767–1847), the greatest composer-saint of Carnatic music. The history of this small town is thus deeply linked with the growth and development of South Indian classical music.

The Little **Thyagaraja Temple**, in the town, was built to commemorate the last resting place of the celebrated composer-saint. A musical festival is held here every

year on the anniversary of his death, which falls, according to the Tamil calendar, in January. Hundreds of musicians and students of Carnatic music gather in the town and sing Thyagaraja's songs from morning till midnight for a whole week.

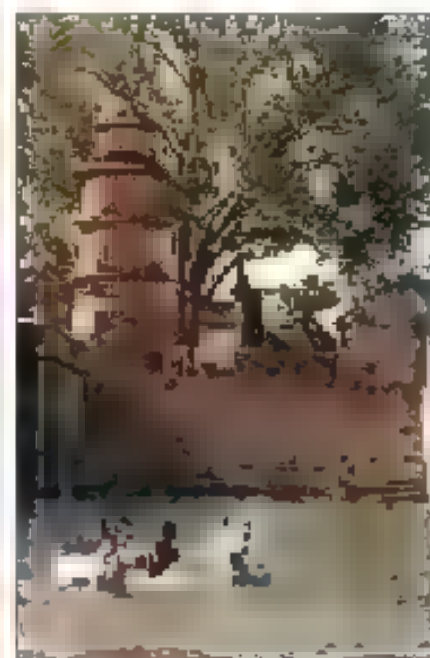
As dawn breaks over the river, a procession of musicians makes the short journey from Thyagaraja's house to the temple, singing continuously all the way. Music lovers wait eagerly at the shrine, seated on the mud floor of the thatch-roofed auditorium. To the sacred chants of priests, the stone image of Thyagaraja is ritually bathed with milk, rosewater, sandalwood and honey. The five songs known as the *pancha ratna* ("five gems") of Thyagaraja, which are considered unequalled masterpieces of Carnatic music, are sung in a grand chorus by all the assembled musicians. This ceremony is an annual reaffirmation of devotion to the composer and to a great tradition of music. For music

lovers from all over India, it can be a magical experience.

Also in the town is the 9th-century **Panchanandishvara Temple** ("Lord of the Five Rivers"), built by the Cholas. Dedicated to Shiva, the shrines of Uttara (north) Kailasha and Dakshina (south) Kailasha, on either side of the main temple, were built by the wives of Rajaraja I and Rajendra I (see pp46–7). The temple's huge *prakara* (boundary) walls, pillared *mandapas* and the Mukti Mandapa are immortalized in the songs of the Nayannars, a sect of 7th-century poet-saints (see p15).

Environs

Pulamanga village, 12 kms (7 miles) northeast of Tiruvaiyaru, is noted for the **Brahmapurishvara Temple**, dating to the 10th century. The temple features elegant depictions of various gods and goddesses.



Children frolicking in the waters of the Kaveri, Tiruvaiyaru

THANJAVUR BRONZES

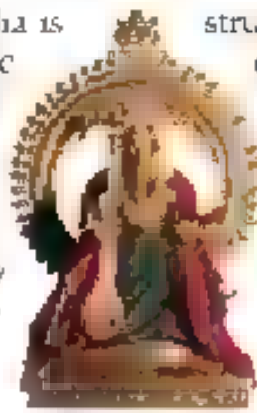


Artisan fashioning bronze idols

The Thanjavur region's wealth of artistic traditions includes the creation of exquisite bronze images through a process known as *cire perdue* or the "lost wax" technique. A model of the image is first made in wax and then coated with layers of clay to create a mould, which is heated to allow the melting wax to flow out through a hole at the base. A molten alloy of five metals (*pancha loka*) is poured into the hollow. When it cools, the mould is broken and the image is finished and polished. Finally, the image's eyes are sealed with a mixture of honey and ghee and then ritually "opened" by a priest, using a golden needle. Even today, traditional artisans, known as *shilpachis*, create these images according to a fixed set of rules and guidelines laid down in the *Shilpa Shashtra*, an ancient treatise on art. The main centre for bronze casting in Tamil Nadu is Swamimalai (see p593).

Carnatic Music

The classical music of South India is known as Carnatic music. Though based on the general concepts of raga (melody) and *tala* (rhythm) found in Hindustani music (see pp28-9), Carnatic music differs in many respects. It is almost exclusively devotional in character, uses different percussion and musical instruments and develops the melody in a more



Thyagaraja, father of Carnatic music

structured manner. It also lays more emphasis on rhythm. Some of the greatest Carnatic music was composed between 1750 and 1850, by the musical trinity of Thyagaraja, Syama Sastri and Muthuswami Dikshitar, who between them wrote over 2,500 songs in Sanskrit and Telugu, modifying and refining features that are now essential to the genre.

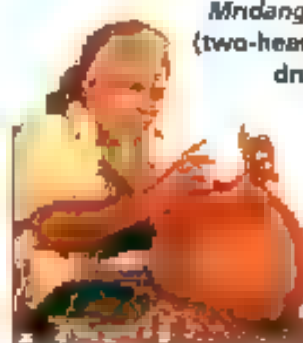
ACCOMPANYING INSTRUMENTS

Traditional South Indian instruments such as the *veena*, the *nadaswaram*, the flute and the *thavil* are used for accompaniment, along with Western instruments such as the violin and saxophone.

MS Subbulakshmi is a leading vocalist.



The violin, a bow-string instrument of Western origin, is played in a seated position.



The ghatam, a mere clay pot, can produce fabulous rhythms in the hands of an accomplished performer.

Mridangam (two-headed drum)



Saraswati veena



Flute



Mridangam

Tanpura

Ghatam

Violin

Music festivals are often held in large cities, where concerts take place in small auditoriums, called sabhas. Most performers are accompanied by a violinist and two percussionists. A typical concert lasts for about three hours, during which a series of songs, usually in Telugu, are sung. The lyrics are as important as the melody and many are devotional in nature.



The *nadaswaram*, which is a wind instrument, is a must at temple festivals, weddings and auspicious occasions. The *thavil* (drum) player performs complex rhythmic improvisations to accompany the melody.



The *veena*, which resembles the more widely seen sitar, is a beautifully hand-crafted string instrument.

Thanjavur

The city of Thanjavur, or Tanjore, lies in the fertile Kaveri Delta, a region often referred to as the "rice bowl of Tamil Nadu". For nearly a thousand years, this great town dominated the political history of the region as the capital of three powerful dynasties – the Cholas (9th–13th centuries), the Nayakas (1535–1676) and the Marathas (1676–1855). The magnificent Brihadishvara Temple (see pp598–9), is the most important Chola monument, while the Royal Palace dates to the Nayaka and Maratha periods. Today, Thanjavur's culture extends beyond temples and palaces, to encompass classical music and dance. It is also a flourishing centre for bronze sculpture and painting.

Shivaganga Fort

Off Hospital Rd. ☐ daily

The quadrangular Shivaganga Fort, southwest of the old city, was built by the Nayaka ruler Sevappa Nayaka, in the mid-16th century. Its battlemented stone walls, which enclose an area of 14 ha (35 acres), are surrounded by a partly rock-cut moat. The square **Shivaganga Tank** in the fort was excavated by Rajaraja I, and later renovated to provide drinking water for the city. The fort also contains the great Brihadishvara Temple, Schwartz Church, and a public amusement park.

Brihadishvara Temple

See pp598–9

Schwartz Church

Off West Main Rd. ☐ daily

The 18th-century Christ Church or Schwartz Church, a legacy of Thanjavur's colonial past, stands to the east of the Shivaganga Tank. This church was founded by the Danish missionary, Reverend Frederik Christian Schwartz, in 1779. When he died in 1798, the enlightened Maratha ruler Serfoji II, donated a striking marble tablet to the church. This tablet, made by John Flaxman, has been placed at the western end of the church. It depicts the dying missionary blessing his royal patron, surrounded by ministers and pupils from the school that he established.

Royal Palace

East Main Rd. ☐ daily 10

☐ extra charges

Resembling the shape of a flying eagle, this palace was built originally by the Nayaka rulers as their royal residence, and was subsequently

remodelled by the Marathas. A large quadrangular courtyard leads into the palace complex, at one end of which is a pyramical, temple-like tower.

Outside the palace complex stands the seven-storeyed, arched observation tower, now without its capping pavilion.

The splendid Maratha Darbar Hall, built by Shahji II in 1684, has elaborately painted and decorated pillars, walls and ceiling. A wooden canopy embellished with glittering glass pieces and supported by four wooden pillars stands above a green granite slab on which the



Maratha ruler Serfoji II
(r. 1798–1832)



Seven-storeyed observation tower of the Royal Palace, Thanjavur

royal Maratha throne once stood. The other buildings include the Sadar Mahal, which is still the residence of the erstwhile royal family and the Pura Maha.

The **Rajaraja Museum and Art Gallery** in the Nayaka Darbar Hall, was established in 1951 and has an impressive collection of bronze and stone idols dating from the 7th to the 20th centuries. Particularly noteworthy are the images of Shiva, such as the Kalyanasundaramurti, which depicts the wedding of Shiva and Parvati (see p566) and the Bhikshatanamurti, which shows Shiva as a wandering mendicant, carrying a begging bowl and accompanied by a dog.

Next to the Rajaraja Museum is the **Saraswati Mahal Library**, constructed by the Maratha rulers. This is one of the most important reference libraries in India, with a fine collection of rare palm-leaf manuscripts and books collected by the versa-



Mural at the entrance of Saraswati Mahal, Royal Palace, Thanjavur

Thanjavur Brihadishvara Temple



A Shiva sculpture

This monumental granite temple, the finest example of Chola architecture, is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Completed in AD 1010 and dedicated to Shiva, it was built by Rajaraja Chola I (see pp46-7) as a symbol of the unrivalled power and might of the Cholas. The temple basement is covered with inscriptions that give details of the temple's administration and revenue, and

provide valuable historical information on Chola society and government.



★ Vimana

The 66-m (217-ft) high pyramid-shaped vimana, over the sanctum, is a 13-storeyed structure. Its gilded finial was presented by the king.



The passageway is circumambulatory and built on two levels, owing to the colossal height of the 4-m (13-ft) linga.

★ Dvarapala

Two gigantic dvarapalas, or doorkeepers, at the eastern entrance, direct devotees to the sanctum with their pointed fingers.

Frescoes

Chola frescoes adorn the passage around the sanctum. They were discovered when the 17-century Maratha paintings covering them began to disintegrate.



An octagonal cupola, beautifully carved out of a massive block of granite weighing 80 tonnes, crowns the vimana.

Linga shrine

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Vimana
- ★ Dvarapala
- ★ Nand Mandapa



General View of the Temple

The Brihadisvara Temple stands in the middle of a rectangular court, surrounded by subsidiary shrines. On the southern side of the courtyard is an Archaeological Museum which displays, among other things, photographs of the temple before restoration.

★ Nandi Mandapa

Carved out of a single block of granite weighing 25 tonnes, this huge Nandi figure is 6 m (20 ft) long, and faces the inner sanctum.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Thanjavur W of bus stand

☐ daily For permission to visit inner chambers of the sanctum and the top floors, contact the temple. (04362) 230 826, or Thanjavur tourist office

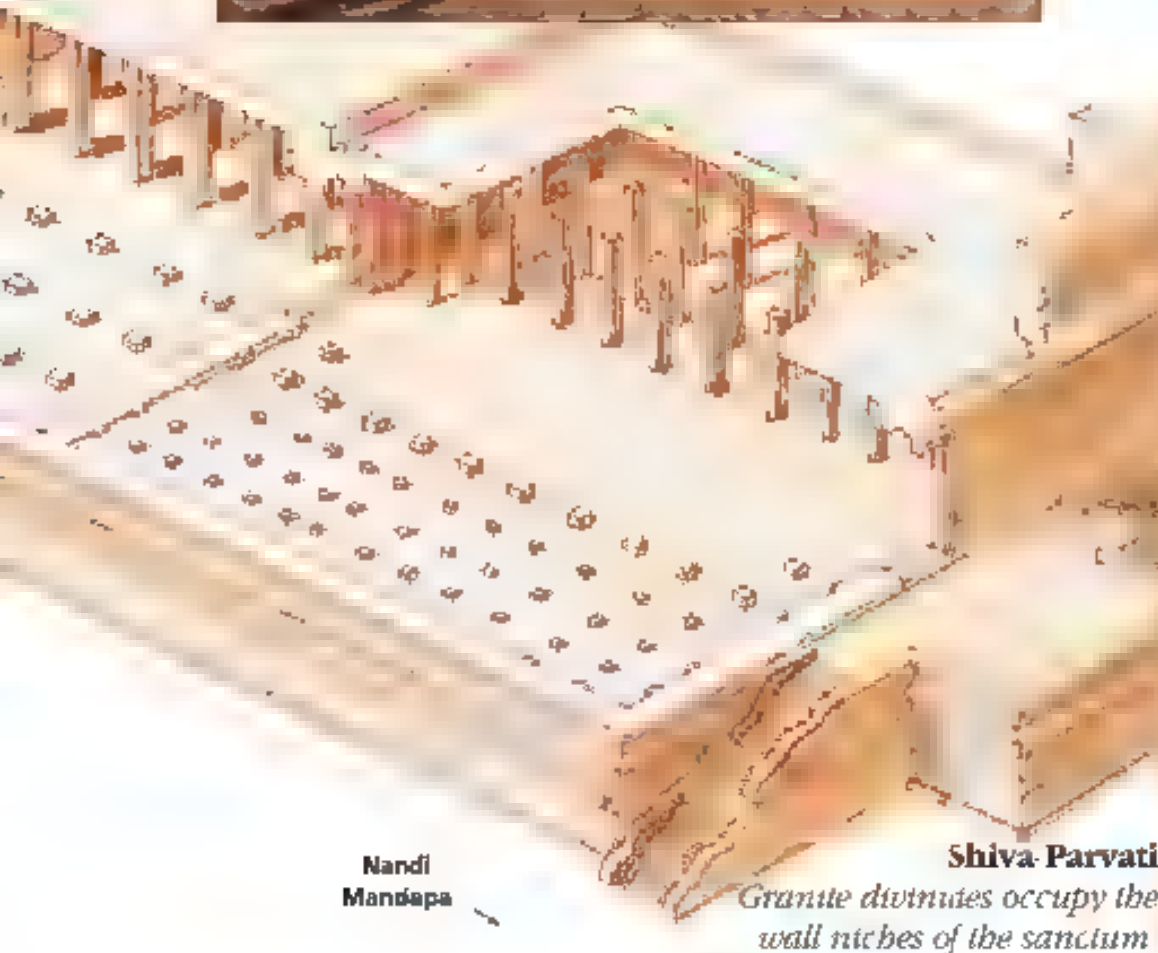
Archaeological Museum

☐ daily ☐



Priests Outside the Temple

Although under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India, the temple has recently been opened for worship.



Nandi
Mandapa

Shiva-Parvati

Granite divinities occupy the wall niches of the sanctum.





Tiruchirapalli's Rock Fort looming above the city

Tiruchirapalli

Tiruchirapalli district 60 km (37 miles)
W of Thanjavur. 746, 100 7 km
(4 miles) S of town centre, then bus or
taxi. Hotel Tamil Nadu, 1
Williams Rd. (04) 1 241 4346
Teppakulam Float Festival (Mar).

Situated at the head of the fertile Kaveri Delta, this city is named after the fierce three-headed demon (*Irusira*) who attained salvation after being slain by Shiva. The town's history is interwoven with the political fortunes of the Palavas, Cholas, Nayakas and finally the British, who shortened its name to Trichy. Today, Tiruchirapalli is Tamil Nadu's second largest city.

Dominating the town is the massive **Rock Fort**, perched dramatically on a rocky outcrop that rises 83 m (272 ft) above the flat plains. This impregnable fortress was constructed by the Nayakas of neighbouring Madurai, who made Tiruchirapalli their

second capital in the 16th and 17th centuries. They also expanded the Shiva temple where the god is worshipped as *Thayumanavar* (the "God who Became a Mother"). Legend says that when a flash flood prevented a mother from coming to her pregnant daughter's aid, Shiva assumed her form and helped in the childbirth. Further up, on the summit, is a small Ganesha Temple from where there are spectacular views of verdant rice fields and the sacred island of Srirangam.

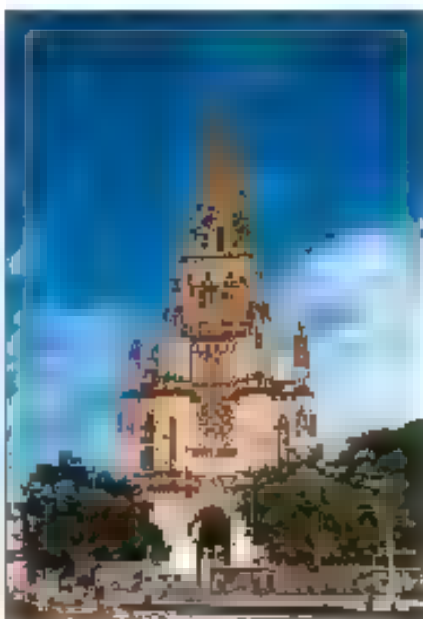
At the base of the southern rock face is the first of the two cave temples. The lower one dates to the 8th century, and the upper one to the reign of the great Palava ruler, Mahendra Varman (r 600–630). This contains one of the great wonders of Palava art, the *Gangadhara Panel*, depicting Shiva holding a lock of his matted hair to receive the River Ganga as she descends from the heavens (see p163).

Much of the present town dates to the 18th and 19th centuries, when the British constructed the cantonment and numerous civic buildings and churches. Many of these buildings are located around the large Teppakulam Tank at the base of the fort – a busy area surrounded by fruit, vegetable and flower markets.

Among the town's earliest churches are Christ Church (1766) founded by Reverend Frederick Christian Schwartz (see p596), to the north of the tank, the Neo-Gothic **Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes** (1840), to the west of the tank, and the Jesuit St Joseph's College, also to the west of the tank. In the cantonment, which lies to the southwest of the fort, is the Church of St John (1816).

Rock Fort

daily extra charges



The Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes at Tiruchirapalli

THE KAVERI RIVER



Shrine depicting the legend of Goddess Kaveri

One of the nine sacred rivers of India, the Kaveri covers a length of 785 km (488 miles) from its source at Talakaveri in Karnataka (see p521) to Poompuhar on the Bay of Bengal. Myths glorify the Kaveri as the personification of a female deity (in some versions, Brahma's daughter), who erupted from the sage Agasthya's *kamandala* (water pot). From the early centuries of the Christian era, the Kaveri has been central to Tamil culture, especially under the Cholas, who ruled the region between the 9th and 13th centuries. The great temple cities that developed along its course became centres of religion, dance, music and the arts. Farsighted water management schemes in the delta, instigated by the Cholas, transformed the Thanjavur region into the "rice bowl" of Tamil Nadu, and even today, devotees offer rice to the river goddess on the 18th day of the Tamil month *Aadi* (July–August). Unfortunately, the river has now become the subject of a bitter dispute over water distribution between the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka governments.

Environs

At **Kallanai** 24 km (15 miles) northeast of Tiruchirapalli is a 300-m (984-ft) long earthen dam across the Kaveri river, the Grand Anicut. This formed part of the huge hydraulic system created by the Cholas (see pp46–7) to divert water from the river into a vast network of irrigation canals. The original no longer exists and the dam in operation today was rebuilt by British engineers in the 19th century.

Other places of interest are the 7th-century Shiva temple at **Narthamalai** 17 km (11 miles) to the south, and the 9th-century Jain cave temples at **Sittanavasal** 58 km (36 miles) to the southeast. Faded paintings here portray dancing girls and a lotus tank with swans and fishes.

Srirangam 15

Tiruchirapalli district, 9 km (6 miles) N of Tiruchirapalli.   **Vaikuntha Ekadashi (Dec/Jan), Chariot Festival (Jan).**

The sacred 3-km (2-mile) long island of Srirangam formed by the Kaveri and Kolam rivers is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites in South India. At its core is the majestic **Ranganatha Temple** (see pp552–3). Dedicated to Vishnu, this is one of the largest temple complexes in Tamil Nadu and covers an enormous area of 60 ha (148 acres).

The complex as it exists today has evolved over a period of four centuries.

Extensive reconstruction first took place in 1371, after the original 10th-century temple was destroyed by the Delhi Sultan, Alauddin Khilji (see p48). Its present form, however, includes extensions added in the 17th century by the Nayaka rulers, whose second capital was in neighbouring Tiruchirapalli.

Interestingly, the last addition was as recent as 1987, when the unfinished southern gateway was finally completed.

Dominated by 21 impressive *gopuras* (gateways), the complex has seven *prakara* (boundary) walls defining its seven enclosures. The outer three comprise residences for priests, hostels for pilgrims, and small restaurants and shops selling religious books, pictures and sundry temple offerings. The sacred precinct begins from the fourth enclosure, beyond which non-Hindus are not allowed. This is where the temple's most important shrines are located. Among these are the spacious **Thousand-Cornered Mandapa**, where images of Ranganatha and his consort are enthroned and worshipped during one of the temple's many festivals, and the magnificent **Seshagirirayar Mandapa**, with its rearing



A coracle ride on the Kaveri, Srirangam

stone horses with mounted warriors attacking fierce animals and *yalis* (mythical lionlike beasts). A small museum close by has a good collection of stone and bronze sculptures.












Horse, Seshagirirayar Mandapa

The core of the complex is the sanctum with its gold-plated *vimana*, where an image of Vishnu as Ranganatha reclining on the cosmic serpent Adishesha is enshrined. This temple is also the place where the great 11th-century philosopher, Ramanuja (see p522), developed the *bhakti* cult of personal devotion into a formalized

mode of worship. Today a constant cycle of festivals glorifying Vishnu are celebrated throughout the year.

East of the Ranganatha Temple is the mid-17th-century **Jambukeshvara Temple** in the village of Tiruvanakka. The main sanctum contains one of the five elemental lingas (see p584), representing Shiva as the manifestation of water. Legend says that the linga was created by Shiva's consort, Parvati, and in homage to her the priest wears a sarri when performing the *pooja*. Non-Hindus can view the outer shrines in the complex, but not the main sanctum.

-  **Sri Ranganatha Temple**
 daily  for viewpoint on top. 
 extra charges. **Museum**  daily
 **Jambukeshvara Temple**
 daily  extra charges



One of the impressive gateways at the Ranganatha Temple, Srirangam

The verdant Marthanda Valley with the misty Nilgiri Hills in the background ▷







Yerikadu Lake, from which Yercaud derives its name

Yercaud 16

Salem district 32 km (20 miles) NE of Salem Salem, then bus Hotel Tamil Nadu, Yercaud Ghat Rd, (04281) 223 334 Shevaroyan Temple Festival, (May).

This attractive hill station, situated in the Shevaroy Hills, was established in the early 1800s by the British, who introduced the coffee plant here. Today, this is one of the state's most productive areas, and its surrounding

slopes are entirely covered with plantations of coffee, tea, jackfruit and plantains.

The man-made **Yerikadu Lake** and the **Killyur Falls** are two of the area's most scenic spots, while **Lady's Seat**, near the lake, offers delightful views of the surrounding countryside. The town and its environs have several apiaries that produce delicious honey. The **Horticultural Research Station** has an interesting collection of rare plants.

Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary 17

Nilgiris district 64 km (40 miles) W of Udhamandalam. Theppakadu, the main entry point. Tourist Office, Theppakadu, (0423) 244 3977. For bookings contact Wildlife Warden's Office, Ooty, (0423) 244 4098. daily (may be closed during Feb-Mar). Jeeps available.

Mudumalai, or "Ancient Hill Range", situated at the base of the Nilgiri Hills, is separated from Karnataka's Bandipur National Park (see p520) by the Moyar river.

This sanctuary is an important constituent of the 5,500-sq km (2,124-sq mile) Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve of the Western Ghats. Along with adjacent Bandipur and Nagarhole, it provides one of the most important refuges for the elephant and the bison in India. The park encompasses 322 sq km (124 sq miles) of undulating terrain, and rises to 1,250 m (4,101 ft) at Moyar.

Tour of the Nilgiris 18

The picturesque *nila Giri* or "Blue Mountains", at the junction of the Eastern and Western Ghats, are so named because the shrub *kurunji* (*Strobilanthes kunthianus*) turns the hills blue with its blossoms every 12 years. Covered with high altitude grasslands and *sholas* (montane evergreen forests), they are of special interest to botanists and entomologists. This tour offers enchanting glimpses of lush green valleys, hill stations and hamlets inhabited by tribal people.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length. 90 km (56 miles).

Getting around: Avajanche and Pykara can only be reached from Ooty, as there are no road links from Coonoor. The route is well covered by public & private buses. An exciting alternative is the **Nilgiri Blue Mountain Train**, which runs from Mettupalayam to Ooty, via Coonoor (see p777).

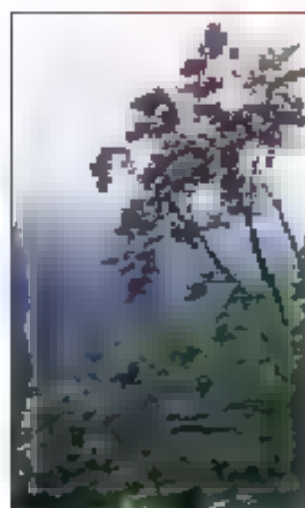
Avajanche 19

This natural paradise has dense forests and a beautiful lake.

0 km 3
0 miles 3

KEY

— Tour route
— Other roads



Jacaranda in full bloom in the Nilgiris

Pykara 20

Dams fenced *sholas*, green meadows and cone-shaped Toda houses can be seen here.



Betta The lowest point of the sanctuary is at the picturesque **Moyar Waterfalls**. Its topography is as varied as the vegetation, which ranges from dense deciduous forests of teak, laurel and rosewood in the west to scrub jungle towards the east, interspersed with grassland, swamps and bamboo brakes.

The sanctuary provides a habitat for a rich diversity of wildlife, including the Nilgiri tahr (see p151), sambar tiger, leopard, spotted deer, flying squirrel, Malabar civet and Nilgiri langur. Over 120 species of birds, resident and migratory, can be seen here as well. These include the scops owl and the crested hawk eagle.

GUARDIAN DEITIES

Huge figures made of burnt clay can be seen on the outskirts of villages in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. They are worshipped as the guardians of the villages. The most prominent folk deity is Ayyanar, the son of Shiva and Vishnu. This mustachioed god, with prominent eyes, wears short trousers and carries a sword. His horse stands by his side so that he can ride through the night, keeping evil spirits at bay. Other deities are Munisami, who holds a trident and shield and rides a lion, and the black-haired Karuppusami, the nocturnal avenger who punishes thieves.



Guardian deities outside a village shrine

Coimbatore 12

Coimbatore district 96 km (60 miles) NE of Chennai 924,000 10 km (6 miles) NE of city centre then bus Tamil Nadu Tourism, Railway Station, (0422) 230 2176 Mon-Sat Thaipusam (Jan/Feb), Karthikai (Nov/Dec)

Tamil Nadu's third largest city, Coimbatore is a major industrial centre and the state's commercial capital, with large textile mills and engineering units. It is also a convenient base for visiting the Nilgiri hill stations. The city has a reputed Agricultural College and two famous temples. The **Perur Temple** on the Noyya river and the popular **Muruga Maruthamalai Temple**, on top of a hillock, are dedicated to Lord Shiva and his son, Murugan, respectively. They are visited by thousands of devotees during temple festivals.

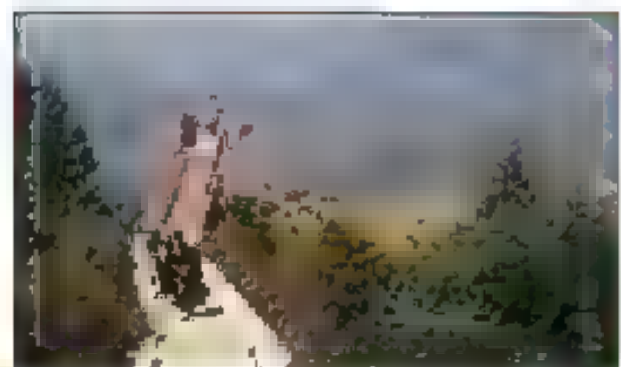
The **Siruvani Waterfalls** are beautiful, and Siruvani water famed for its purity and taste.

Ooty 1

Officially known as Udhagamandalam, this Queen of Hill Stations was originally inhabited by the Todas (see p607). The century-old Blue Mountain Trap terminates here.

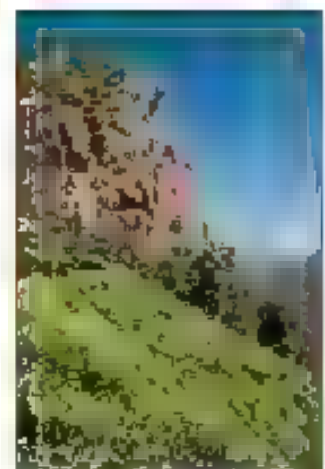
Dodda Betta 2

The highest peak in the Nilgiris (2,623 m/8,606 ft) has fantastic views of the hills, valleys and plateaux.



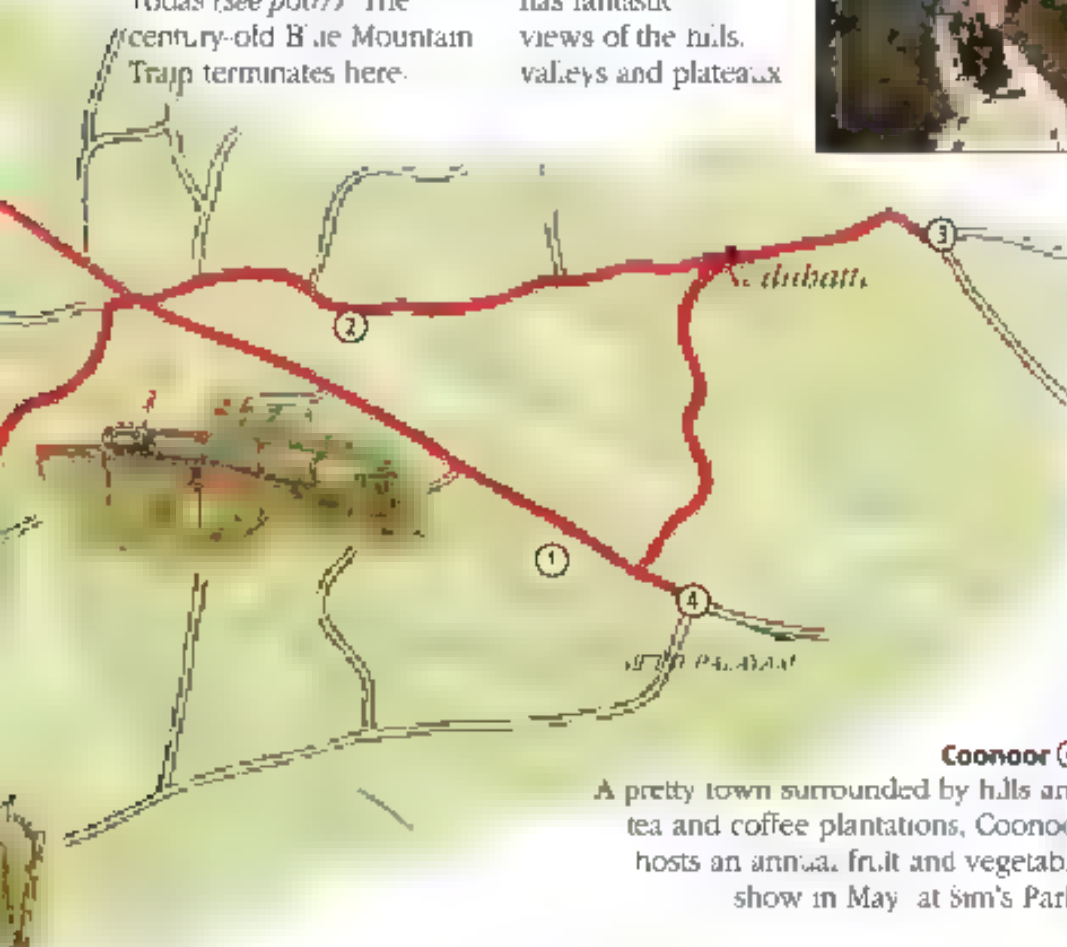
Kotagiri 3

Known for its salubrious climate, this hill station is situated in the shadow of Dodda Betta Peak.



Coonoor 4

A pretty town surrounded by hills and tea and coffee plantations, Coonoor hosts an annual fruit and vegetable show in May at Sim's Park.





Tree-lined avenue in Kodalkanal

Palani 20

Madurai district, 100 km (62 miles) NW of Madurai. ✕ Madurai, 119 km (74 miles) SE of town centre, then bus or taxi. 🚶 🚶 🚶 *Thaipooam* (Jan/Feb), *Karthikai* (Nov/Dec)

A major pilgrimage centre, Palani is situated on the edge of the great Vyapuri Tank. Its hilltop **Subrahman-yam Temple** is the most famous of the six abodes of Murugan, the son of Shiva, who is said to have come here disguised as a mendicant after quarreling over a fruit with his brother, Ganesha. Popularly known as Dandayitha Patti ('Bearer of the Staff'), Murugan is depicted with a clean shaven head, holding a stick. His image is made of medicinal herbs, mixed together to create a wax-like substance. During the Thaipooam festival, the

temple attracts thousands of pilgrims, many of whom shave their heads as an act of worship. An electric cable car takes devotees up the 600 steps to the hill shrine.

Palani is also a base for hikes in the surrounding hills.

Kodaikanal 21

Madurai district, 120 km (75 miles) NW of Madurai. 🚶 Palani, 65 km (40 miles) N of town centre, then bus or taxi. 🚶 🚶 *Tamil Nadu Tourism*, (04542) 241 675. 🕒 Mon–Sat. 🌸 *Summer Festival* (May), *Flower Show* (May), *Winter Festival* (Dec). 🚶

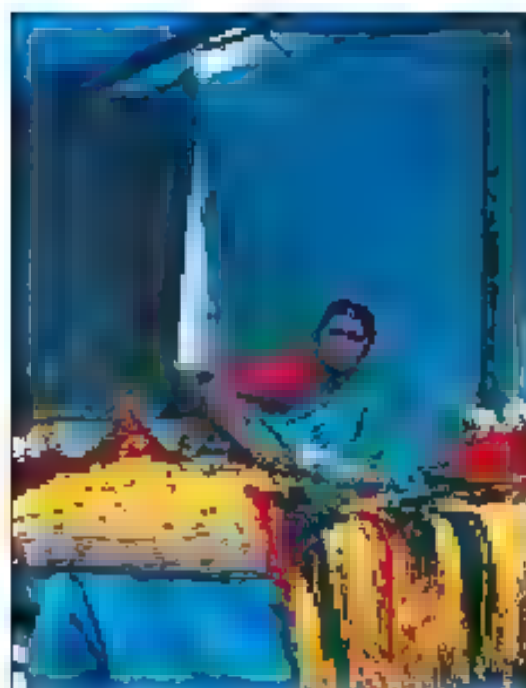
Lush green valleys, terraced plantations and a pleasant climate make Kodaikanal, one of Tamil Nadu's most popular hill stations, Kodaikanal or Koda, as it is commonly called, was first 'discovered' by American missionaries in the

1840s. Drawn by its bracing climate and clean environs, they created a sanatorium-cum-retreat here. They also established Kodai's International School in 1901.

This picturesque town is today spread out around the man-made, star-shaped **Kodai Lake**, created by the dam built by Sir Vere Henry Levinge in 1863. The 3-km (2-mile) long trail around the lake makes for a pleasant walk. On the shore is a Boat House, built in 1910. East of the lake is **Bryant Park**, famous for its plant collection and its annual flower show held in May.

Beyond the city centre are a number of scenic areas, such as **Pillar Rocks**, **Silver Cascade** and **Green Valley View** (originally known as **Suicide Point**), which offer enchanting picnic spots and views of the deep valley. Kodai also has many opportunities for cycling, riding and long, rambling walks. A trail following the roadside called **Coaker's Walk** provides a panoramic view of the hill station. The walk ends at the Church of St Peter, built in 1881, which has fine stained-glass windows. Nearby is a small **Telescope House**.

Some 3 km (2 miles) north-east of the lake is the **Kurunji Andavar Temple**, dedicated to Murugan. It is named after the amazing *kurunji* flowers (see pp646), associated with the god. The Chettiar Park nearby and, out along the hillside, is where the *kurunji* blooms every 12 years.

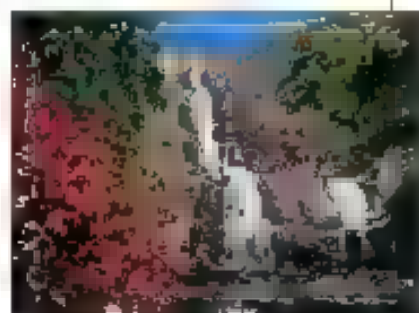


Religious offerings for sale in Palani

HIKING IN THE NILGIRIS

Short excursions around Ooty offer many opportunities to explore the Nilgiris (see pp604–605), on foot. There are scenic trails in the grasslands around Mukartan, an extinct volcano known to the Todas as the 'Gateway to the Dead', and in the windswept

Avalanche region, which consists of rolling, grassy downs, *shola* trees and rhododendrons. The western edge of this region falls away into the dense tropical jungles of Kerala. The eastern half of the range, largely deprived of the Southwest Monsoon, is dominated by dry scrub and volcanic rock.



Waterfall in the Nilgiris

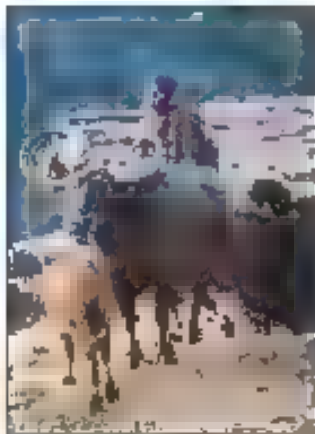
The Todas

The Nilgiris are home to 18 tribal groups, among whom the Todas are the most remarkable. A pastoral community, the Todas are fair-skinned and curly haired and are strict vegetarians. Their language though of Dravidian origin has no script. According to their creation myth, Goddess Tekirshy and her brother On first created the buffalo by waving a magic wand, and



Traditional silver jewellery

then created the Toda man. The first Toda woman was created from the right rib of the man. The Todas' first contact with civilization occurred when the East India Company annexed the Nilgiris in 1799. In 1823, John Sullivan, the then Collector of Coimbatore, built the first stone house in Ooty on land purchased from the Todas. Today there are only about 1,100 Todas left.



Toda buffaloes, pale brown with long horns, are deeply revered. A buffalo is often sacrificed after a funeral to accompany the deceased's soul in the afterlife.



Homespun cotton shawls called puthukuzh, have black and red embroidered motifs. Worn by both Toda men and women, they are tied around the waist with one end thrown over the shoulder, almost like a Roman toga.

The dairy temple, conical in shape, is decorated with sun, moon, serpent, and buffalo head motifs. Only men are allowed to go inside.



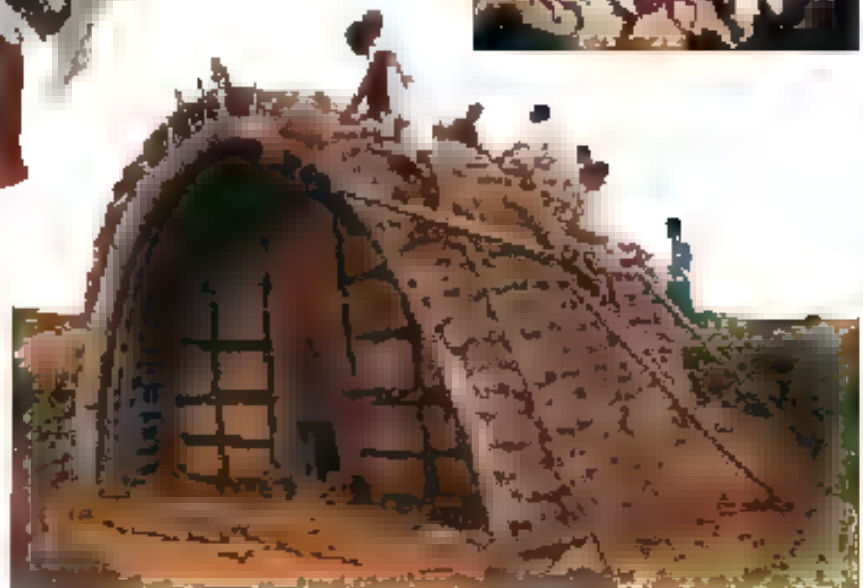
Elders are treated with great respect, and greeted by lifting their right foot and putting it on one's head for their blessings.



Dairy ceremonies are festive occasions, generally celebrated with dance and music. The lively songs consist of simple stanzas describing important events from the Todas' past.



The barrel-shaped huts, made of bamboo, grass and cane, consist of a single room. Entry is through a carved wooden door so small that one has to crawl through it to enter. Several of these windowless bamboo huts make up a Toda village which is called a *manu*.



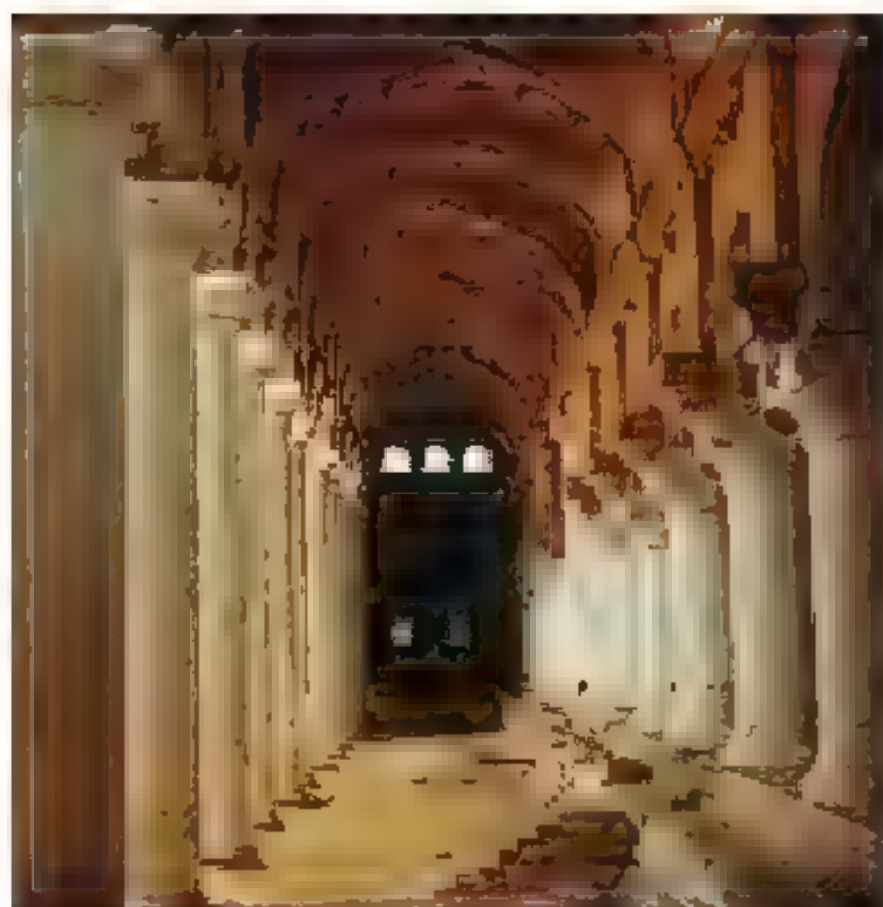
Madurai 22



Scripted
image

One of South India's great temple towns.

Madurai is synonymous with the celebrated Minakshi Temple (*see pp610–11*). This ancient city on the banks of the Vaigai river has, over the centuries, been a rich repository of Tamil culture. Some 2,000 years ago, it hosted the famous Sangams (gatherings of writers and poets), which were to provide Tamil literature with some of its most enduring works. From the 7th to 13th centuries, as the capital of the Pandyas, it saw art and trade with Rome and China flourish. It later became part of the Vijayanagar Empire, and was the Nayaka capital in the 16th–17th centuries. Today, religion and culture remain a vibrant part of the city's daily life.



The grand pillared hall in the Thirumalai Nayaka Palace

Minakshi Sundareswara Temple

See pp610–11.



Thirumalai Nayaka Palace

1.5 km (1 mile) SE of Minakshi Temple  **Son et Lumière** (English): 6.45pm, daily 

The power and wealth of the Nayakas is evident from the remains of this once grand palace, built by Thirumalai Nayaka in 1636. The building, with its interesting Islamic influences, was partially restored in the 19th century by Lord Napier, governor of Madras between 1866 and 1872. Today, only the spacious rectangular courtyard called



the Swarga Vilasam ("Heavenly Pavilion") and a few adjoining buildings survive, their awesome scale evoking the grandeur of a vanished era. The courtyard measures 3,900 sq m (41,979 sq ft), and is surrounded by massive circular pillars. To its west lies the Throne Chamber, a vast room with a raised, octagonal dome. This room leads to the Dance Hall, which now houses a display of archaeological objects.

Theppakulam

E of Minakshi Temple   Madurai's great tank is another marvel attributed to Thirumalai Nayaka. The square tank has steps, flanked


by animal- and bird-shaped *vastrades*, leading down to the rippling waters. This is the venue of the annual Theppam (Float) festival, celebrating the marriage of Shiva and Minakshi, when their images are taken in illuminated boats to the small pavilion in the centre of the tank.

Kadal Alagar Temple

1 km (0.6 miles) SW of Minakshi Temple   to non-Hindus

One of the 108 sacred Vaishnavite shrines, this glorious temple has three superimposed sanctuaries, of diminishing size, housing Lord Vishnu. From bottom to top, the images show Vishnu in the seated, standing and reclining position. The outer wall has beautiful sculptures and stone screens.

Anglican Cathedral

Off W Masi St 

A fine example of Neo-Gothic architecture, this church was designed by Robert Fellowes Chisholm (*see p569*), and consecrated in 1881.

Tombs of the Madurai Sultans

N of the Vaigai river 

The sultans of Madurai ruled the city after the invasion in 1310 by Malik Kafur, a general of Alaaddin Khilji (*see p48*). They lie buried to the north of the city. The complex includes Alaaddin's Mosque, with its flat-roofed prayer hall and tapering octagonal towers, and the tomb of a local Sufi saint, Bara Mastan Sada, built in the 16th century.



Entrance to the Anglican Cathedral at Madurai



A mural depicting a scene from the *Ramayana*, Aragarkoil Temple

Enviorns

Thiruparankunram, 6 km (4 miles) southwest of Madurai, is a small town known for its sacred granite hill. Regarded as one of the six sacred abodes of Murugan, the son of Siva, the hill was the site of his marriage to Devayani, the daughter of Indra. There is a rock-cut temple here built by the Pandavas in the 8th century. The temple is approached through a series of 17th- and 18th-century

mandapas, at ascending levels, linked by stone steps. The entrance *mandapa* has typical Nayaka period pillars with horse and *yali* riders, while portraits of Nayaka rulers are carved on the columns. The temple's main sanctum contains five shrines.

The 14-day temple festival, in March/April, celebrates the victory of Murugan over the demon Suran, his coronation and his subsequent marriage to Devayani.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Madurai district, 498 km (309 miles) SW of Chennai 923,000. 12 km (7 miles) S of city centre Hotel Tamil Nadu, (0452) 273 3757 Mon-Sat Theppam Festival (Jan/Feb), Navaratri (Sep/Oct), Avanimoolam (Aug/Sep).

The temple at **Aragarkoil**, 12 km (7 miles) north of Madurai, is dedicated to Kallagar, a form of Vishnu who is regarded as Minakshi's brother. According to legend, when Kallagar went to give his sister in marriage to Sundareswara, he stayed on the banks of the Vagai river during the ceremony. This event is celebrated every year, in April/May. On the summit of the hill is Palamedachalai, the last of the six abodes of Murugan, marked by a shrine while further away is Nupur Ganga, a perennial spring used for all rituals in the temple and believed to have emerged from Vishnu's ankle.

MADURAI CITY CENTRE

- Anglican Cathedral ④
- Kada Alagar Temple ③
- Minakshi Sundareswara Temple ①
- Thirumalai Nayaka Palace ②

0 metres 500

0 yards 500



Key to Symbols see back flap

Madurai: Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple

This enormous temple complex is dedicated to Shiva, known here as Sundareshvara (the "Handsome God") and his consort Parvati or Minakshi (the "Fish-eyed Goddess"). Originally built by the early Pandyas (7th–10th centuries), it was extensively added to by succeeding dynasties, especially between the 14th and 18th centuries. The temple complex is within a high-walled enclosure at the core of which are the two sanctums for Minakshi and Sundareshvara, surrounded by a number of smaller shrines and grand pillared halls. Especially impressive are the 12 *gopuras*. Their soaring towers rise from solid granite bases, and are covered with stucco figures of deities, mythical animals and monsters, painted in vivid colours.



Guardian Deities

Fierce monster images, with protruding eyes and horns, mark the arched ends of the vaulted roofs, and serve as guardian deities.

GOPURA

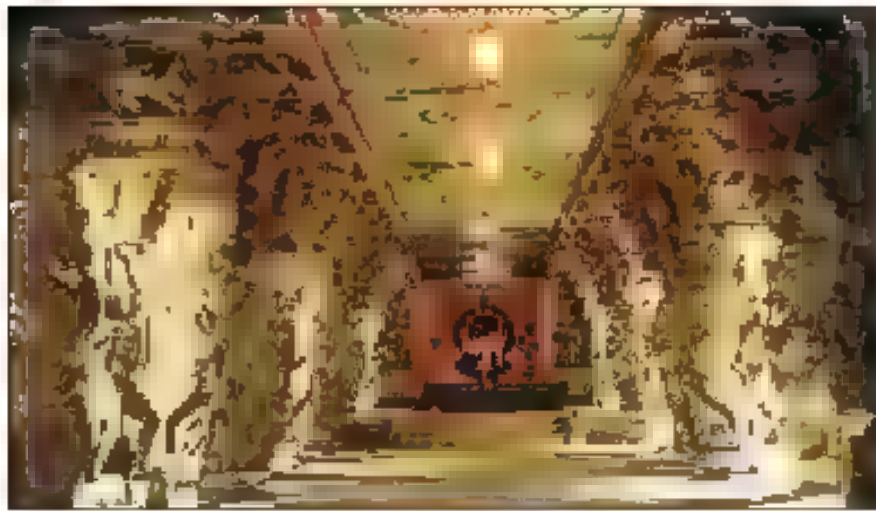
Pyramidal gates (*gopuras*) rise to a height of more than 50 m (164 ft). These towering gateways indicate the entrance to the temple complex at the four cardinal points, while lesser *gopuras* lead to the sanctums of the main deities.



Stucco Work

The figures of deities on the tower are repaired, repainted and ritually reconsecrated every 12 years.

Openings in the middle of the long sides allow light to enter the hollow chambers at each level.



The profusely carved pillars of the Thousand-Pillared Hall

Exploring the Minakshi Temple

The temple is entered from the eastern side through the **Ashta Shakti Mandapa** or the "Hall of Eight Goddesses" with sculpted pillars representing the various aspects of the Goddess Shakti. Next to this hall is the **Minakshi Nayaka Mandapa**—a spacious columned hall used for shops and stores. This hall has a votive lamp-holder with 1,008

lamps, which are lit on festive occasions and present a spectacular sight.

The adjacent seven-storeyed **Chitra Gopura**, is the tallest tower in the complex. Next to it is the **Potramarai Kulam**, or "Golden Lotus" Tank, with steps leading down to the water. It is surrounded by pillared corridors that once bore paintings from the Vijayanagar period. To the west of this tank is the **Minakshi Shrine**, one of the two main shrines

comprising two concentric corridors and many halls and galleries. Here lies the bed to which Minakshi's "husband" in the form of Sundareswara's image, is brought every night from his own shrine, the **Sundareswara Shrine**, which stands to the north. The god resides in this, the second

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Chitrai St. **Tel** (0452) 234 4360

☐ daily Non-Hindus not allowed inside the sanctum

☒ extra charges. ☒ Chitrai Festival (mid-Apr), Avanimoolam (Aug/Sep). **Museum** ☐ daily ☒ extra charges.

main shrine, amid columns that bear the fish motifs emblematic of his wife.

The 16th-century "Flagpole Hall" or **Kambattadi Mandapa**, in front of this shrine, has a pavilion with a seated Nandi, a gilded flagpole and ornately carved pillars depicting the 24 forms of Shiva.

To its east is the **Thousand-Pillared Hall** with 985 beautifully decorated columns. Dating to the 16th century, this hall is now a museum which displays bronze and stone images. A set of pillars, carved in stone, produce the seven notes of Carnatic music.

The **Kalyana Mandapa**, to the south of the pillared hall, is where the marriage of Shiva and Parvati is celebrated every year during the Chitra Festival in mid-April.

Pudumandapa, the 100-m (328-ft) long "New Hall" with portrait sculptures of the Nayaka rulers, is outside the main temple complex. Built by Tirumala Nayaka in 1635, it now houses a market selling sans, jewellery and spices.

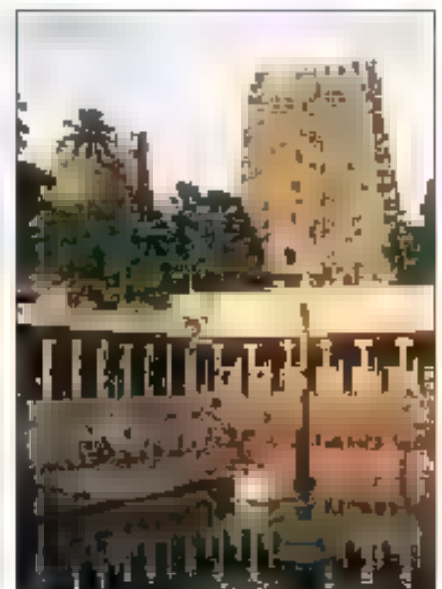
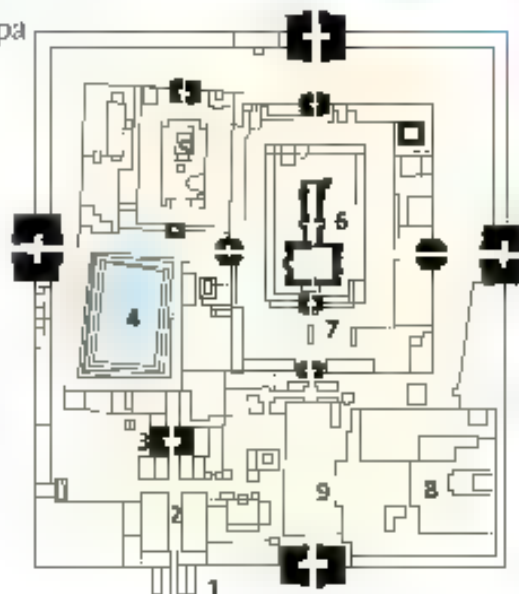


Kalyana Sundara, Vishnu giving Minakshi to Shiva

MINAKSHI SUNDARESHVARA TEMPLE COMPLEX

- 1 Ashta Shakti Mandapa
- 2 Minakshi Nayaka Mandapa
- 3 Chitra Gopura
- 4 Potramarai Kulam
- 5 Minakshi Shrine
- 6 Sundareswara Shrine
- 7 Kambattadi Mandapa
- 8 Thousand-Pillared Hall
- 9 Kalyana Mandapa

0 metres 100
0 yards 100



The Potramarai Kulam, surrounded by a colonnade

Chettiar Mansions

The arid region encompassing the towns of Karaikudi, Devakottai and their neighbouring villages, collectively known as Chettinad, is distinguished by large ornate mansions which are the ancestral homes of the Chettians. Tamil Nadu's rich merchant community. Like the Marwaris of Shekhavati



An arched passageway

(see pp372-3), the Chettians were astute businessmen who travelled far to make their fortunes. The wealth they acquired in Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Vietnam was used to build these elaborate mansions. Today, the Chettians are prominent bankers and industrialists based in Chennai and Bangalore.

CHETTIAR HOUSES

Built in the early 20th century, these houses reflect the social, ritual and kinship needs of the community, as well as its economic status. Though now unoccupied for most of the year, they are still used for family celebrations.



A long verandah with wooden pillars leads to a series of open courtyards, surrounded by rooms to accommodate the growing family.



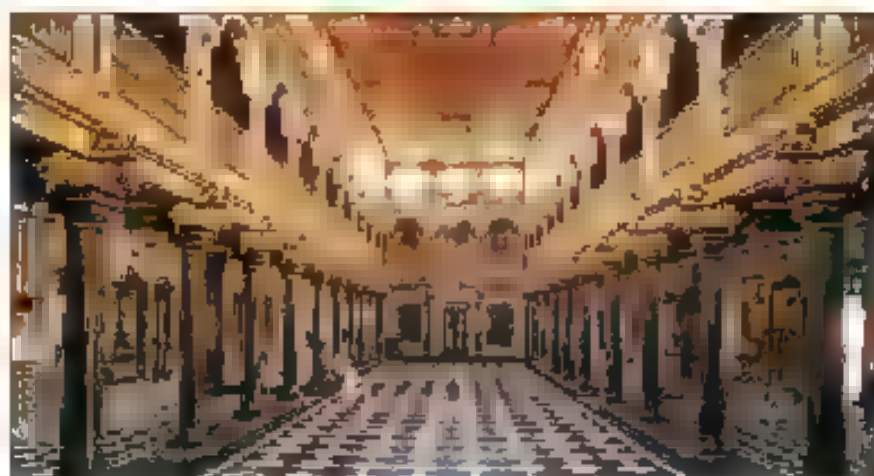
The splendid Chettinad Palace, Karaikudi



The first pillared hall, where each pillar is made from an entire tree trunk of Burma teak, is reserved for the men of the house to receive guests and conduct business.



The formal reception room has marble floors, stained-glass windows, painted cornices, teak and rosewood furniture and ornate chandeliers.



Elaborate marble floors, well-polished doorways, carved wooden beams, granite pillars, and other decorative elements in a Chettiar house display the skills of the Tamil craftsmen.



Intricately carved wooden doorway

Chettinad ㉓

Chettinad district: 82 km (51 miles)
NE of Madurai ㉑ ㉒ ㉓ daily
㉔ Bullock Races (Jan/Feb)

Karaikal, the heart of the Chettinad area, has several temples, including the 7th-century **Pillaiyarpatl Temple** dedicated to Lord Ganesh. It also has fine Chettiar mansions, and antique shops stocked with treasures from these mansions. Chettinad is famous for its hot, spicy, non-vegetarian cuisine – pepper chicken is one of the most popular dishes. The food is prepared in copper vessels and served on plantain leaves.

Ramanathapuram ㉔

Ramanathapuram district: 117 km
(73 miles) SE of Madurai ㉑
62,000 ㉑ ㉒ ㉓ daily ㉔ Jrs at
Erwadi Dargah (Dec)

This ancient town is associated with the **Setupatis**, local rulers who rose to prominence in the late 17th century under the Madurai Nayakas. They derived prestige and income by controlling the isthmus that led to Rameshvaram island. A century later their rule came to an end when they surrendered to the East India Company in 1792.

To the west of the present town is the palace complex of the Setupatis. Though little remains, the 17th-century **Ramalinga Vilas**, on the north side of the palace complex, still has well-preserved wall paintings. These depict the epics as well as battle scenes, business transactions and royal ceremonies. The upper chambers depict more private royal scenes, such as family gatherings, music and dance recitals, and hunting expeditions. A small shrine, facing north, is dedicated to the family goddess of the Setupatis, **Rajarajeshvari**. It stands immediately south of the Ramalinga Vilas.

On the outskirts of the town is the 800-year-old **Erwadi Dargah** housing the tomb of Ibrahim Syed Anna, a Muslim



The longest corridor at Ramanathaswamy Temple, with sculpted pillars

saint. It attracts devotees from all over India, as well as from Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore during its annual festival in December.

Rameshvaram ㉕

Ramanathapuram district: 163 km
(101 miles) SE of Madurai
㉑ 38,050 ㉑ ㉒ ㉓ Tourist office,
East Car Street, (04573) 221 064
㉔ Ramalinga (Jun/Jul)

A major pilgrimage site, the sacred island of Rameshvaram juts out into the Gulf of Mannar, the narrow body of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka.

The **Ramanathaswamy Temple**, in the middle of the island, is dedicated to Shiva. It houses the linga that Lord Rama, the hero of the epic *Ramayana* (see p27), is said to have installed and worshipped after his victory against Ravana in Lanka. Founded by the Chola rulers but expanded extensively

during the Nayaka period, in the 16th to 18th centuries, this massive temple is enclosed within a high wall with five *gopuras*. The most remarkable feature of this temple is the **Sokkattan Mandapa**, so called because it resembles a *sokkattan* (dice) in shape. It surrounds the core of the temple on four sides in a continuous corridor and is the largest and most elaborate of its kind, with 1,212 pillars extending 197 m (646 ft) from east to west and 133 m (436 ft) from north to south. The complex also has a staggering 22 *tirthas* (fanks) for ritual ablutions: it is believed that a dip in the Agni Tirtha, in front of the temple, removes all sins. The installation ceremony of the linga by Rama and Sita is celebrated every year.

Standing on **Gandamadana Hill**, the highest point of the island, 3 km (2 miles) north-west of the Ramanathaswamy Temple, is a two-storeyed *mandapa* that is said to shelter the footprint of Rama.

Dhanushkodi ("Rama's Bow"), the southern-most tip of Rameshvaram, about 18 km (11 miles) from the main temple, has a spectacular beach. From here, a series of rock pillars, known as Adam's Bridge, can be seen extending far into the horizon. These are believed to have been used by Hanuman when he crossed the ocean in search of Sita. The Kodanararama Temple, on the shore, is said to be where Ravana's brother surrendered to Rama. Miraculously, the temple survived a devastating cyclone in 1964.



Devotees taking a dip in the holy waters of the Agni Tirtha

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp713–14 and pp740–41

Tuticorin 26

Tuticorin district 135 km (84 miles),
S of Madurai 216, 100.
 Golden Chariot Festival (Aug.)

This is Tamil Nadu's second largest natural harbour, and the main port of call for ships from Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Tuticorin is also a major industrial centre with thermal power stations, spinning mills and salt extraction units.

The city's other important commercial activity is pearl fishing. Since the early centuries of the Christian era, this region's pearls have been in demand throughout the world. Ancient Tamil literature mentions a flourishing trade with the Romans, who bought Tuticorin pearls in exchange for gold and wine.

Today the government, which has set up a society of divers, strictly regulates pearl fishing, in order to protect the oyster beds – sometimes pearl fishing is allowed only once in ten years. The pearl fishers still use traditional methods, diving to a depth of up to 70 m (230 ft) without oxygen to extricate the pearls. Most divers can remain underwater for more than a minute; their only safeguard against accidents or natural danger is to dive in pairs.

Tuticorin was occupied by the Portuguese in the 17th century and later by the Dutch and the British. Its colonial past is visible in two elegant churches, the Dutch **Sacred Heart Cathedral**, built in the mid-18th century, and the beautiful 17th-century **Church of the Lady of the Snows**, built by the Portuguese.



The Church of the Holy Cross in Manapad

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp713–14 and pp740–41



Corridor of the Kanthimathi Nellaiyappar Temple, Tirunelveli

Tiruchendur 27

Tuticorin district 223 km (139 miles)
S of Madurai from Madurai,
Tirunelveli, Tuticorin & Nagercoil
 Annual Temple Festival (Jun/Jul)

This beautiful coastal town, one of the six sacred abodes of Shiva's son, Murugan (see p606), has the impressive **Subramanyam Temple**. Dating to the 9th century, it was renovated in the 20th century. The temple, entered through the towering Mea *gopura*, is built on a rocky promontory overlooking the Gulf of Mannar, and provides lovely views. On the seashore, there are many caves and rock-cut sculptures.

Environs

Manapad 18 km (11 miles south) has one of the oldest churches in India, the Church of the Holy Cross. Built in 1581, it preserves a fragment of the "True Cross", brought from Jerusalem. An annual festival held every September attracts pilgrims from all over the region. St Francis Xavier visited this coastal village in 1542.

Tirunelveli 28

Tirunelveli district 154 km (96 miles) SW of Madurai
Tamil Nadu Tourism, Tirunelveli
Junction, (0462) 250 0104
Chariot Festival (Jun/Jul)

Situated in the fertile tract by the Tamaraparani river, Tirunelveli is dominated by the **Kanthimathi Nellaiyappar Temple**, parts of which date to the 13th century. This complex of twin temples, dedicated to Shiva and Parvati, has two huge rectangular enclosures connected by a long corridor. The Shiva temple is to the north, while the Parvati temple is to the south. The elaborate *mandapas* here include the Somavara Mandapa, which contains two pillars carved like *gopuras*; the Rishaba Mandapa, with exquisitely carved sculptures of Manmatha, the God of Love, and his consort Rathi; and the Mani Mandapa, with a set of stone pillars that produce the melodic notes of Carnatic music (see p595) when tapped.

Every summer the temple's wooden chariots are led in procession through the town during the annual Chariot Festival, which attracts thousands of devotees.

Environs

Courtallam (Kuttalam) Falls, at an elevation of 170 m (558 ft), are 59 km (37 miles) northwest of Tirunelveli. This picturesque spot is famed for its exotic flora and the medicinal properties of its waters.



Sthanumalaya Temple at Suchindram, overlooking the temple tank

Suchindram 29

Kanniyakumari district 247 km (154 miles) S of Madurai. Nagarcot, 5 km (3 miles) NW of town centre, then bus. Arudra Festival (Dec/Jan).

This small temple town is closely linked with the legend of Kumari, the Virgin Goddess (an incarnation of Parvati). It is believed that Shiva rested at this quiet spot by the banks of the Pelayar river, while the goddess Kumari performed her penance at Kanniyakumari.

Suchindram's unique **Sthanumalaya Temple** is dedicated to the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The rectangular complex has enormous, brightly coloured *gopuras* dating from the 7th–18th centuries, which depict stories from the great epics (see pp26–7). One of the two main shrines, built in the 13th century, contains the Sthanumalaya linga, which symbolizes Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The other is dedicated to Vishnu, whose image is made of a special kind of jaggery and mustard.

The temple also boasts a set of musical pillars made from single blocks of granite. When tapped, each pillar produces a different musical note. Other highlights are a 5-m (16-ft) high statue of Hanuman placed opposite the Rama shrine, and the exquisite sculptures in the Vasantha Mandapa. A special *pooja* is held here every Friday evening, with music and a procession. In the complex is an ancient banyan tree, and a sculpture of Shiva's bull, Nandi, which locals believe actually continues to grow

Kanniyakumari 18

Kanniyakumari district 235 km (146 miles) S of Madurai. 19,700 Tamil Nadu Tourism, Beach Rd, (04652) 246 257 Chaitra Purnima (Apr), Navaratri (Sep/Oct).

The southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent, where the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal meet, Kanniyakumari enchants visitors with its spectacular views, especially at sunrise and sunset. The most breathtaking of these occurs on Chaitra Purnima (the full moon night in April) when both sunset and moonrise occur at the same time.

Kanniyakumari is believed to be the abode of Kumari, the Virgin Goddess, who is supposed to have done penance here so that she could marry Shiva. The marriage, however, did not take place, since it was deemed that she remain a virgin in order to save the world. Her temple, the **Kumari Amman Temple**, a popular pilgrimage centre on the seashore, was built by the Pandya kings in the 8th century and was extensively

renovated by the Chola, Vijayanagar and Nayaka rulers.

A magnificent structure, the temple has a Navaratri Mandapa with a beautifully painted panel of Mahishasuramardini (Durga killing the demon Mahisha). An 18th-century shrine within the temple contains the footprints (*sripadaparas*) of the goddess Kumari, who performed her penance at this spot.

The **Gandhi Memorial** near the temple, is where Mahatma Gandhi's ashes were kept before immersion. The building is designed so that every year on October 2nd (Gandhi's birthday) at midday, the rays of the sun fall on the exact spot where his ashes were placed.

Just off the coast, on a rocky island, the **Vivekananda Memorial** marks the spot where the great Indian philosopher Swami Vivekananda (see p286) meditated before attending the World Religious Conference in Chicago in 1893. Near the memorial is the imposing 40-m (131-ft) high statue of Tiruvalluvar, the 1st-century BC Tamil poet, who wrote the epic *Tirukkural*, often referred to as one of the greatest classics of Tamil literature.

The **Church of Our Lady of Joy**, which was founded by St Francis Xavier in the 1540s, is located at the southern edge of the town. Other attractions include the sandy beaches and the multi-coloured granite rocks.

Kumari Amman Temple

daily Sanctum closed to non-Hindus.

Vivekananda Memorial

Wed–Mon every 30 min.

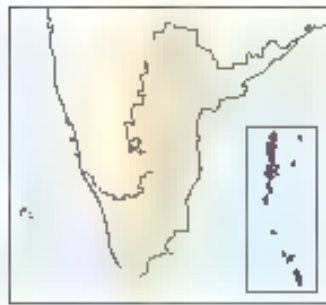


A statue of the poet Tiruvalluvar, on the beach at Kanniyakumari



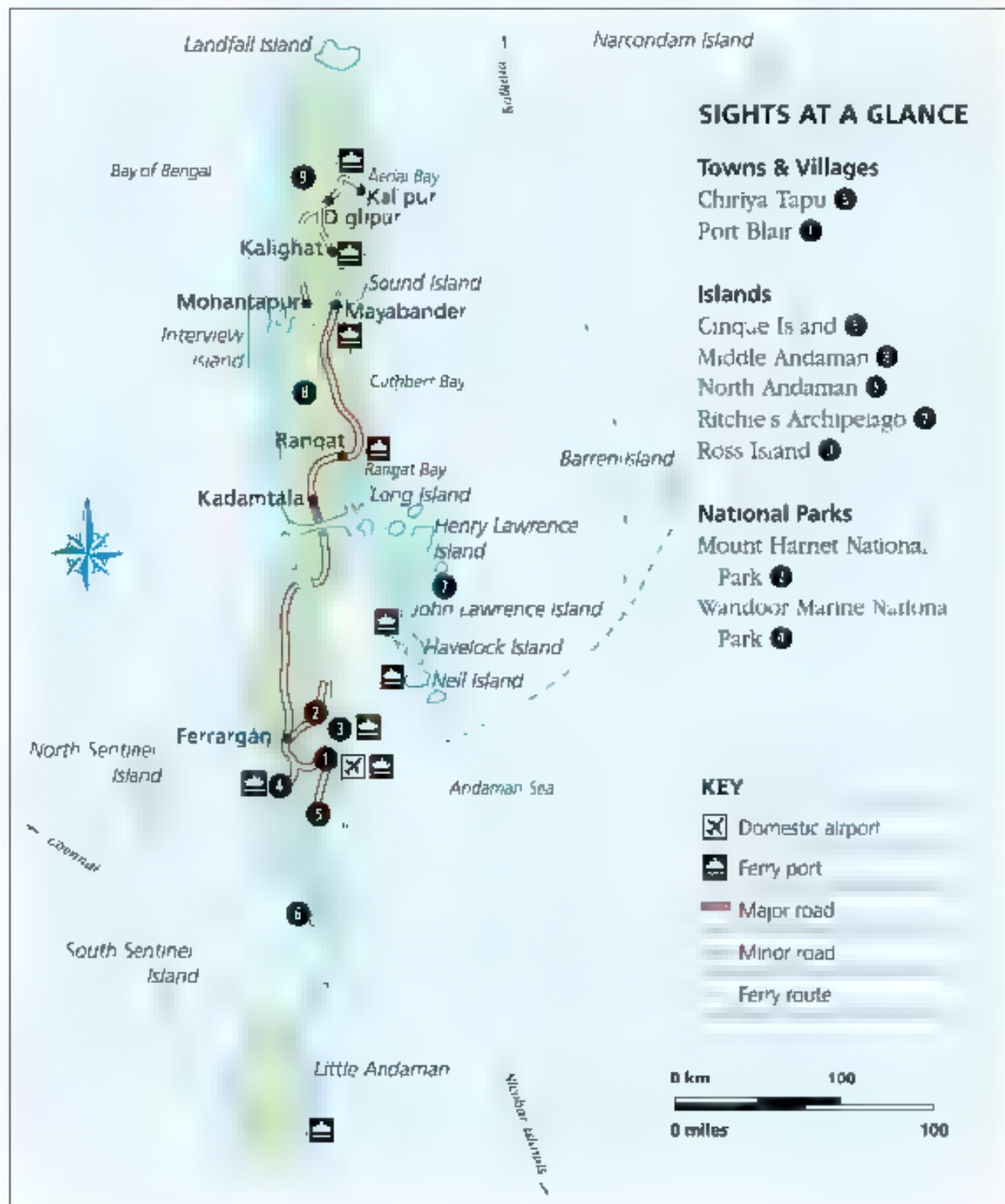
ANDAMAN ISLANDS

An archipelago of 572 idyllic islands in the Bay of Bengal, about 1,000 km (620 miles) from the mainland, the Andamans and the neighbouring Nicobar Islands are actually the peaks of a submerged mountain range which extends from Myanmar to Indonesia. They encompass three distinct ecosystems – tropical forests, mangroves and coral reefs, which support a staggering variety of plant and animal life. Foreign visitors require a permit (see p758), and are not allowed on the Nicobar Islands. Many parts of the Andamans, too, are off limits, to pre-



serve their rare biodiversity and protect the six tribal groups, some of whom are fiercely independent. Their hostility was probably the reason why Marco Polo described the islands as being inhabited by cannibals.

The Andamans acquired the sinister name Kala Pani ("Black Waters") in the 19th century, when the British established a penal colony here. The islands were severely hit by the tsunami waves in December 2004. Their permanent population includes migrant Indians, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans and Karens from Myanmar. The surrounding reefs are ideal for water sports.





An aerial view of the capital, Port Blair

Port Blair ①

South Andaman Island 1,190 km (739 miles) E of Chennai 100,200 3 km (2 miles) S of town centre, then bus or taxi.
 Govt of India Tourist Office, Junglighat Rd, (03192) 233 006, Andaman & Nicobar Tourism, (03192, 230 933) **Travel permits** are required for the Andaman Islands (see p758) Island Tourism Festival, (Dec/Jan).

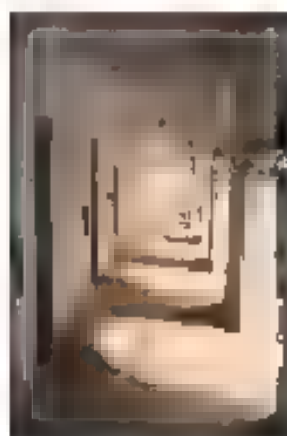
The capital, Port Blair is located to the southeast of South Andaman Island. The town is a base from which to travel around the archipelago, and is well equipped with hotels, banks, tour operators and sports complexes.

The town's tumultuous history began in 1789 when Lieutenant Archibald Blair of the British East India Company conducted a survey to identify a safe harbour for the Company's vessels. He chose the site of what is now Port Blair. Fifty years later the islands became a penal colony. Those incarcerated were political activists involved in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 (see p53); by 1864 the number of prisoners had grown from 773 to 3,000. In 1896, the construction of the **Cellular Jail** began; it soon became an infamous symbol of colonial oppression. Designed specifically for solitary confinement, it earned the

islands the dreaded name of Kala Pani, or "Black Waters" reflecting the atrocities that awaited the prisoners. It remains Port Blair's most prominent landmark.

Of the original seven wings laid out around a central watchtower, only four remain: three have been converted into a hospital and are lined with cells, each 3 by 3.5 m (10 by 11 ft) in size. Daily rations consisted of two cups of drinking water and two cups of rice. Executions were frequent and

many were made to undergo hard labour. Japanese troops, who occupied the Islands during World War II, destroyed part of the prison. In 1945 the British moved back, re-established their headquarters at Port Blair and closed the jail. It is now a memorial to the political prisoners, a moving



A row of tiny cells, Cellular Jail

sound and light show is held here every evening. The town's other places of interest are scattered around. A bi-ethnic Bazaar, on the east side of town. The **Anthropological Museum** west of the Bazaar sheds light on the islands' tribal inhabitants and has a collection of rare photographs taken in the 1960s. The Aquarium, also known as the **Fisheries Museum**, at the eastern end of MG Road, displays hundreds of species of unusual fish, corals and shells. Next door, the **Andaman Water**

Sports Complex offers a range of activities including windsurfing and parasailing, and also hires out row boats and rubber dinghies. The **Samudrika Marine Museum** run by the Indian Navy has five galleries devoted to the history, geography and anthropology of the Islands and has a superb display on marine life. The tiny zoo at Haddo has successfully bred saltwater crocodiles and returned them to the wild. At the **Forest Museum** nearby different varieties of local wood are on display.

Chatham Sawmills on Chatham Island, 5 km (3 miles) north, is one of the oldest and largest saw mills in Asia. Established by the British in 1836, this is where many of the Islands' fast disappearing species of trees, including the towering *padauk* (Andaman redwood), are processed.

Cellular Jail
Son et Lumière 6–7pm (Hindi), daily 7–8pm (English), daily

Anthropological Museum
 Tue–Sun public hols

Fisheries Museum
Tel (03192, 232 291) Tue–Sun public hols

Andaman Water Sports Complex
Tel (03192, 230 799) daily

Samudrika Marine Museum
Tel (03192, 232 871) Tue–Sun

Forest Museum
 Tue–Sun public hols

Chatham Sawmills
 Mon–Sat, mornings are best





The day's catch, a boatful of fresh crayfish

Environs

The nearest beach from Port Blair is the crescent shaped **Corbyn's Cove**, 7 km (4 miles) south of the capital. **Viper Island**, named after a 19th-century British shipping vessel that was wrecked off its shore, can be reached via a cruise from Port Blair. Its sinister history involves the local prison, built in 1867, whose macabre gallows and torture posts can still be seen. Only daytime visits are allowed as the island has no inhabitants. About 15 km (9 miles) from Port Blair lies **Sippyghat Farm**, where many varieties of spices and indigenous plants and shrubs are grown.


Mount Harriet National Park ②

South Andaman Island, 10 km (6 miles) N of Port Blair.  From Chatham Wharf or Phoenix Bay Jetty (Fisheries Jetty) in Port Blair to Bamboo Flats Jetty, then taxi to park entry point. Tickets for day visits are available at entrance. 

Some of the Andamans' highest peaks are in Mount Harriet National Park, lying across the inlet from Phoenix Jetty in Port Blair. Mount Harriet, at 465 m (1,198 ft), is surrounded by evergreen forests that support a remarkable biodiversity, predominantly birds such as the great black woodpecker and the green imperial pigeon. Well-marked hiking trails include the 2-km (1-mile) walk to Kalapathar, and the 16-km (10-mile) trail to Madhuban Beach where elephants are trained for lumbering. Beware of leeches during the monsoon.

The **Forest Guest House**, on top of Mount Harriet, offers fine views of Port Blair and Ross Island. Visits and overnight stays are possible with permission from the Wildlife Warden (see p621).

Ross Island ①

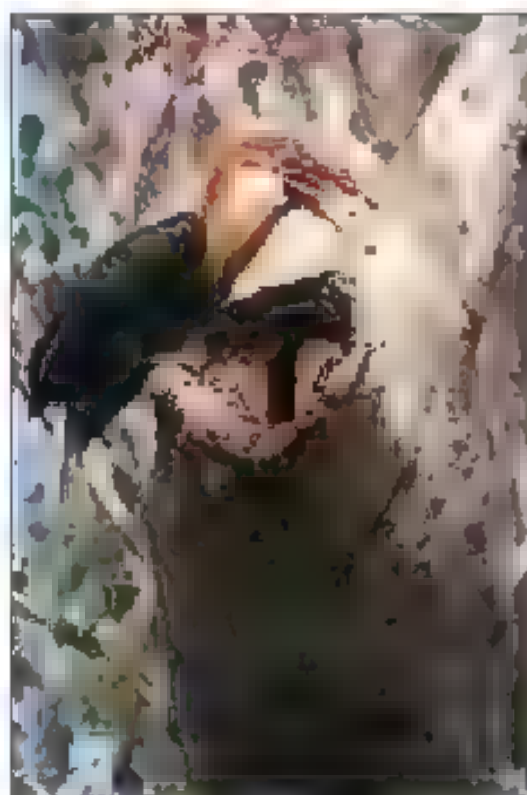
Ross Island, 2 km (1 mile) E of Port Blair.  from Phoenix Jetty. **Travel permits** required for the Andamans (see p758). Only day trips allowed.

A short ferry ride from Port Blair leads to Ross Island, which served as the administrative capital for most of the Andaman Islands from 1858 until 1941. Ross Island's history, however, is much older for it was the home of the indigenous Great Andamanese (see p623). Within 20 years of British occupation, diseases such as syphilis and measles virtually wiped out the tribe, whose numbers dropped from 5,000 to

just 28. Ross Island was also the base for the British administrators of the penal colony in Port Blair and was equipped with swimming pools and jungles. In 1941 the Japanese converted the site into a POW camp, and built war installations, remnants of which can still be seen. It now lies deserted, and the few signs of its colonial glory, such as the chief commissioner's house and the Anglican church, are dilapidated and overgrown. The area is now under the control of the Indian Navy, whose museum *Smritika* records the lives of its political prisoners.



Orchid



The rare Narcondam hornbill

SNORKELLING AND SCUBA DIVING



Snorkelling, a popular way to explore marine life

Snorkelling

Snorkels can be hired out for around Rs 70 per day from numerous tour operators including the Andaman Water Sports Complex in Port Blair. Popular venues are Corbyn's Cove, Wandoor, Chhaya Tapu, Neil and Havelock Islands.

Scuba Diving

There are two registered dive centres in Port Blair. Samudra, (03192) 227 824, in Hotel Sinclair Bay View, is well established, and charges Rs 2,500 for a couple of dives near Port Blair, Rs 3,500 for areas further than Wandoor. It also runs diving courses. Port Blair Underwater, (03192) 229 312, at Peerless Resort in Corbyn's Cove also offers diving courses. The recently opened Andaman Scuba Club on Havelock Island, is a pretty resort on the beach.

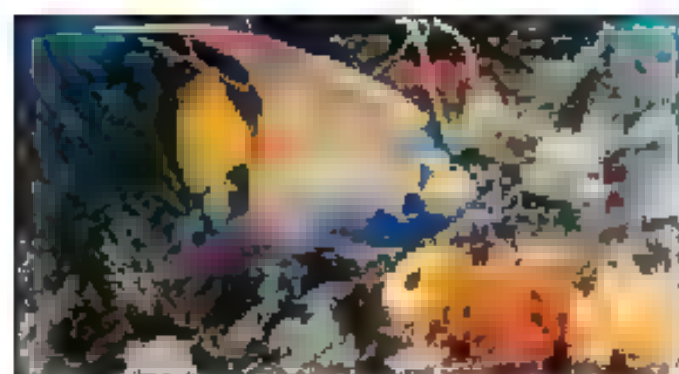
www.andamanscubaclub.com

Eco-friendly Diving

Coral reefs are sensitive and even the gentlest touch can kill them. So avoid touching or treading on them, and be careful with your flippers. Practise descending into the sea before the actual dive, as descent is often too fast, leading to collision with reefs. Do not use anchors near reefs.

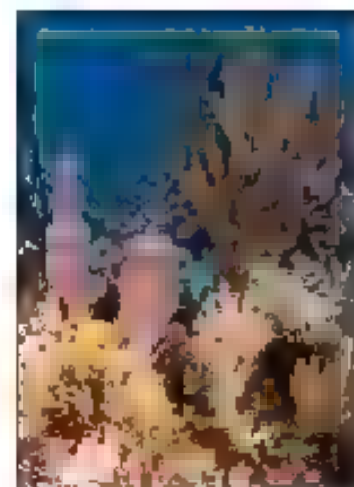
Wandoor Marine National Park

Created in 1983 to preserve the tropical ecosystems of 15 uninhabited islands in the Andamans, the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park at Wandoor stretches over 280 sq km (108 sq miles). It encompasses myriad bays, coral reefs, lagoons, rainforests and mangrove creeks. Ferries from Wandoor village skirt lagoons with kaleidoscopic sea beds, and are often chased by schools of playful dolphins. Most of the islands are protected and are therefore inaccessible; however, their coasts reveal a fascinating transition from towering tropical canopies to stilted mangroves. The only islands that allow visits are Jolly Buoy Island, which is ideal for snorkelling, and Redskin Island, with a well-marked nature trail. Unfortunately, the December 2004 tsunami caused widespread destruction of coral reefs in Jolly Buoy.



Angelfish

The angelfish is one of the reef's most vividly coloured fish. Its bright blues help to camouflage it as well as to advertise its territory.



Types of Coral

Coral is of two broad types – either hard or soft. The colourful soft coral has no outer skeleton.



Lion or Scorpion Fish

Measuring up to 40 cm (16 in), this ornate fish has deadly venom in its rays, which can be fatal for humans.



Giant Robber Crab

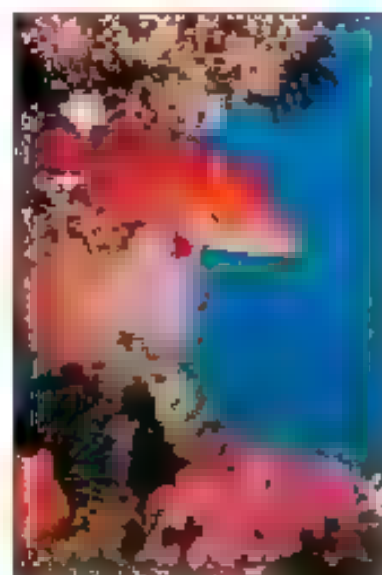
One of the largest and rarest crabs in the world, its powerful claws help it to climb trees such as the coconut palm, and break the hard shell of its fruit.

THE CORAL REEF

Referred to as rainforests of the sea, the multi-coloured reefs are delicate ecosystems that support an amazing variety of marine life (see p647), and over 200 species of coral.

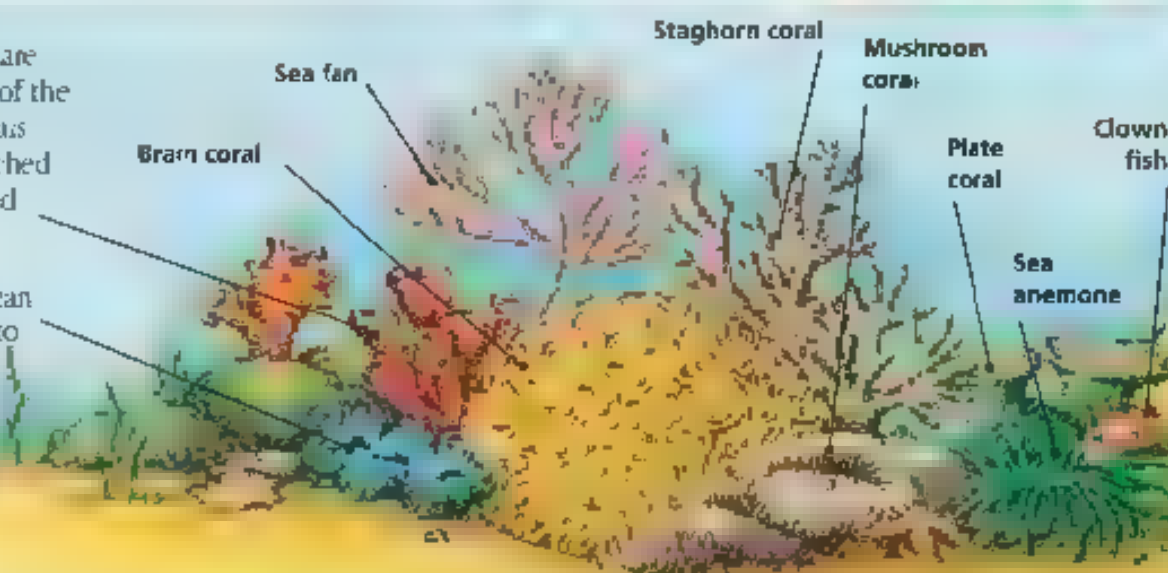
Grouper Fish

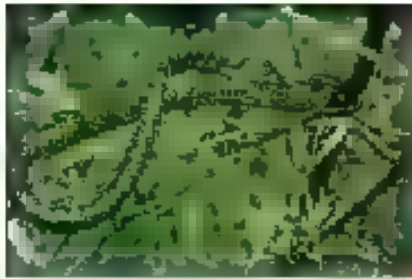
Among the most commonly found species, groupers can change their colour to match the rocks and surrounding reefs.



Sea sponges are the simplest of the marine animals that live attached to the seabed.

Giant clams can measure up to 1 m (3 ft).





Green Tree Snake

One of the 40-odd species found here, this harmless snake has no fangs and eats reptiles and frogs.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

South Andaman Island: 29 km (18 miles) SW of Port Blair
 from Wandoor village
 Chief Wildlife Warden, Haddo, Port Blair, 103192, 233 549. Entry permitted only to Lolly Buoy & Redskin Islands daily, subject to weather. Best time: Dec-Mar.
 Forest Lodge has 4 suites.
 Snorkelling & scuba diving.

Gurjan trees make up the emergent layer, which towers above the canopy at 60 m (197 ft).

Padauk or Andaman redwood grows up to 36 m (118 ft).

Bamboo

Pandanus forms part of the understorey layer.

Ferns

The second layer known as the canopy with trees such as the *padauk* absorbs most of the sunlight.

Orchids

Toung Pienne tree

TROPICAL RAINFOREST

The multi-layered tropical rainforests include giant trees such as the *gurjan* and *padauk*, a rich undergrowth of epiphytes and climbers, and over 120 species of ferns.

Mushrooms

Mangroves

Dense mangrove forests grow along the waterlogged creeks of Wandoor's islands and support a variety of fauna such as snakes, crabs, crocodiles and waterfowl.





A boat gliding across the glass-like surface of a lagoon, Andamans

Chiriyā Tapu ⑤

South Andaman Island, 28 km (17 miles) S of Port Blair. from Port Blair. Taxis available from Port Blair.

The fishing village of Chiriyā Tapu ("Bird Island"), at the southernmost tip of South Andaman Island, is an hour's drive from Port Blair. Its white beaches, skirting a large bay, make it a popular day trip with visitors.

Forest trails through the surrounding tropical undergrowth are a birdwatcher's delight, as they teem with a vast variety of species including rare sunbirds, kingfishers, woodpeckers and eagles. Its beaches, especially the picturesque **Munde Pahar Beach**, are excellent for snorkelling, and there are good camping facilities as well. The forest department is setting up a biological park, to house the animals from Port Blair's zoo (see p618).

Cinque Island ⑥

Cinque Island, 39 km (24 miles) S of Port Blair. motor boats from Port Blair & Wandoor, ferries from Chiriyā Tapu. **Travel permits** required for the Andamans (see p758). Only day visits are allowed.

The volcanic Cinque Island is perhaps the most beautiful of the entire Andamans group, as it has had little human interference over the years and is mostly uninhabited. Comprising two islands, North and South Cinque connected by a sand bar, it was declared a sanctuary in 1987. The surrounding reefs

of rare coral and varied marine life offer some of the best snorkelling and scuba diving in the Andamans. The sandy shores are also among the last refuges of the hawksbill and green sea turtles, which nest here annually in their hundreds.

Environs

Tiny groups of islands known as the **Sisters** and the **Brothers**, lying 12 km (7 miles) and 32 km (20 miles) south of Cinque respectively, can be visited only with a professional diving group.

Large tracts of the remote southern island of **Little Andaman**, 70 km (44 miles) and eight hours by ferry from Port Blair, are a reserve for the 100-odd surviving members of the Onge tribe. It is not advisable to try and make contact with them. Part of northern Little Andaman is open to visitors.

Little Andaman

twice a week from Port Blair.

Ritchie's Archipelago ⑦

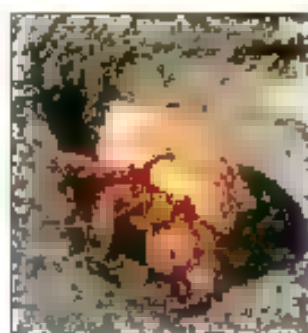
The group of islands lies between 20 km (12 miles) & 40 km (25 miles) E of South Andaman. from Port Blair & Ranqat Bay (Middle Andaman). **Travel permits** required for the Andamans (see p758).

This cluster of tiny islands collectively known as Ritchie's Archipelago, are for the most part protected as national parks to preserve their remarkable biodiversity. Only three islands are open to visitors and are connected to Port Blair by ferry on specific days of the week.

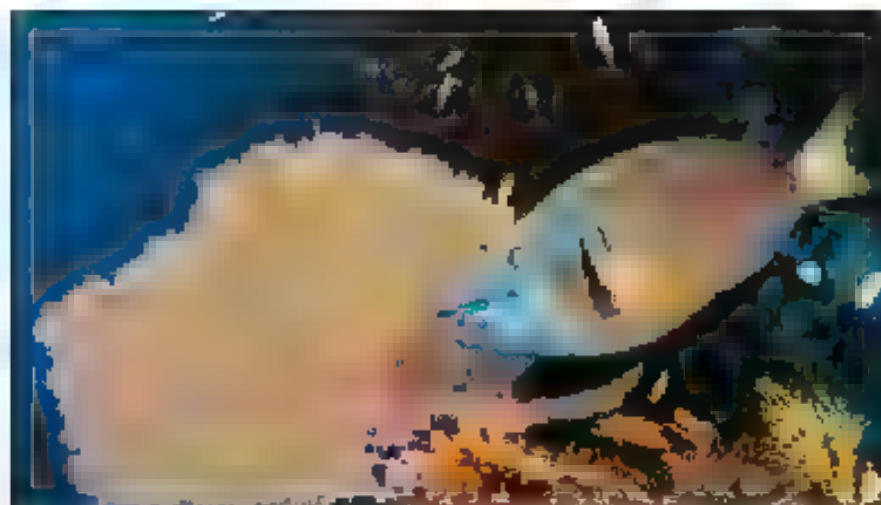
Neil Island, 36 km (22 miles) northeast, is the closest to the capital and is inhabited by settlers from Bengal. The

interior is lush with paddy fields and plantations; the island is the region's main producer of fresh fruit and vegetables. The relatively untouched beaches offer superb snorkelling opportunities.

Havelock Island, 54 km (34 miles) northeast of Port Blair, is the most popular among visitors as it is well equipped, with government and private guesthouses, and also has a well-stocked main bazaar. It is worth trying out the tented accommodation on Radhanagar Beach, at the western tip of the island, where dolphins and turtles can be spotted from the long stretches of white sand. The elephants found on the island



A hermit crab digging a temporary home



A colourful sea fan and a grouper fish



Elephants, indispensable to the islands' lumber trade

were originally brought here to work the timber trade. Bikes and scooters are available and are the best way to explore.

The northernmost island in the archipelago, **Long Island**, 82 km (51 miles) north of Port Blair, attracts few visitors, perhaps because of the eight-hour journey to get there. It nevertheless has attractive beaches. There is just one rest house and virtually no public transport available, although bicycles can be hired. North Passage Island, 55 km (34 miles) S of Port Blair, has a beautiful white sandy beach at Merk Bay.



A vividly coloured local pineapple

Environs

Barren Island 132 km (82 miles) northeast of Port Blair has the only active volcano in India. It erupted twice in recent years, first in 1991 and then in 1994, after lying dormant for nearly two centuries. Rising

sharply from the sea, its enormous crater continues to spew smoke. The island is now a wildlife sanctuary. There is no public ferry service and only chartered ferries make the long, 20-hour journey from Port Blair. Since landing on the

island is not permitted, divers are the only visitors, drawn here by the rich marine life

Middle Andaman ②

Middle Andaman Island 170 km (106 miles) N from Port Blair to Rangat

🚢 from Port Blair **Travel permits required for the Andamans** (see p758).

This is literally the middle island among the Andamans trio. Large tracts of its interior are a part of the highly protected Jarawa Tribal Reserve. The Jarawas, traditional hunter-gatherers, are probably the last racially pure tribe left in India. The Andaman Trunk Road winds along the island's spine, running from Port Blair through Bharatpur Island to Middle Andaman. But with the welfare of the Jarawas in mind, only restricted public transport is encouraged. The area around **Rangat** is lush with tropical forests; the town itself has only a few provision stores. **Rangat Bay** is the point of departure for ferries to Port Blair and Havelock and Long Islands. Just 15 km (9 miles) away **Cuthbert Bay** is a sanctuary for hundreds of marine turtles which arrive here annually to nest. **Mayabander**, at the northern tip, 71 km (44 miles) from Rangat, is a beautiful spot. Some of its beaches, such as **Karmatang**, are famous for their spectacular sunsets, and are also nesting grounds for marine turtles.

North Andaman ③

North Andaman Island 290 km (180 miles) N from Port Blair to Diglipur

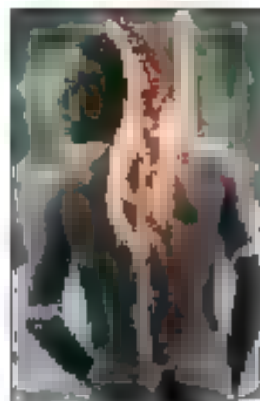
🚢 from Port Blair **Travel permits required for the Andamans** (see p758)

North Andaman is the least populated of the three large islands. **Diglipur** in the northeast, is one of the few places with accommodation. It is known for its beaches – in particular, Ram Nagar and Kalipur – and also has the island's highest peak, **Saddle Peak** (737 m/2,418 ft), which was recently declared a national park. A scenic trail leads to the peak's summit.

From **Aerial Bay** 9 km (6 miles) northeast of Diglipur one can visit Smith and Ross Islands (see p619).

INDIGENOUS TRIBES

Until the 18th century, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were inhabited by 12 distinct groups of aboriginal tribes. Now, overwhelmed by the immigrant population and threatened by disease and loss of land, their numbers have fallen from 5,000 to just 400. The Mongoloid Nicobarese and Shompen tribes of the Nicobars probably migrated from Myanmar, while the origins of the four Negrito tribes, the Jarawas, Great Andamanese, Onges and Sentinelese, continue to baffle anthropologists. Of these, only the largest – the Nicobarese – have partially integrated into the mainstream, while the Onges and the Great Andamanese, now increasingly dependent on subsidies, live in tribal "reserves". The Sentinelese from North Sentinel Island, are still hostile, fending off strangers with showers of arrows. The Shompens of Great Nicobar are as wary of outsiders. Most tribal groups survived the December 2004 tsunami by following their own early warning systems. As the last representatives of truly independent indigenous peoples, perhaps their only chance of survival remains in self-imposed isolation.



A Jarawa tribesman

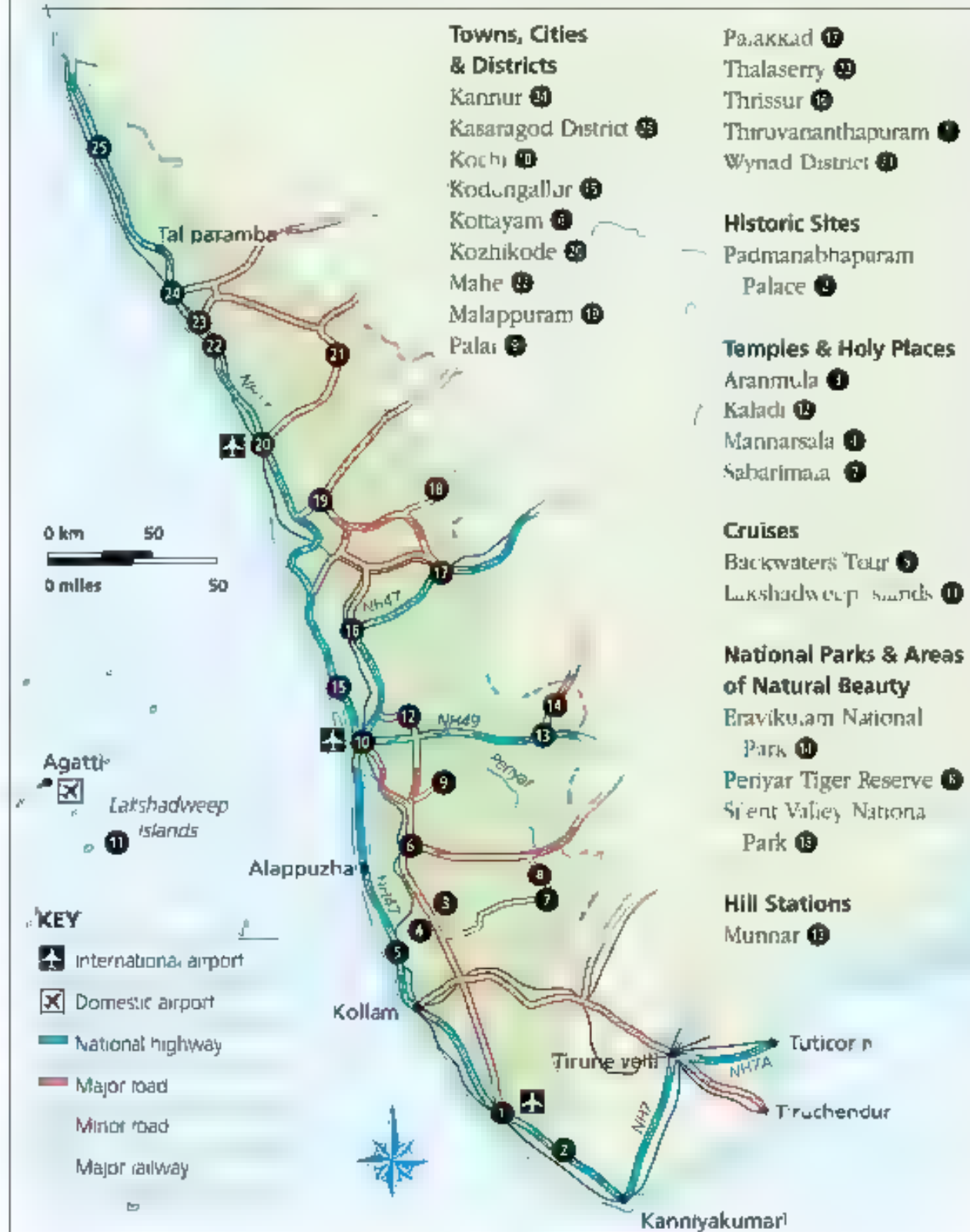


KERALA

Nestling between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, Kerala is an enchanting mosaic of coconut groves and paddy fields, wide beaches and labyrinthine backwaters, verdant hills and rainforests. Its diverse culture is enriched by the three great religions that have ancient roots here. Hinduism is the religion of the majority, practised here with a rare rigour that prohibits non-Hindus from entering most temples. Christianity, followed by a quarter of the population, was brought here by the Apostle

St Thomas, while Islam was introduced by Arab traders in the 7th century. The architectural treasures of the state include the beautiful wooden palace at Padmanabhapuram, stately colonial buildings and a 16th-century synagogue in Kochi. This politically conscious state, where power alternates between Left and Centrist parties, boasts the highest literacy rate in India. Many of its people work in the Middle East, their remittances home adding greatly to Kerala's prosperity.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

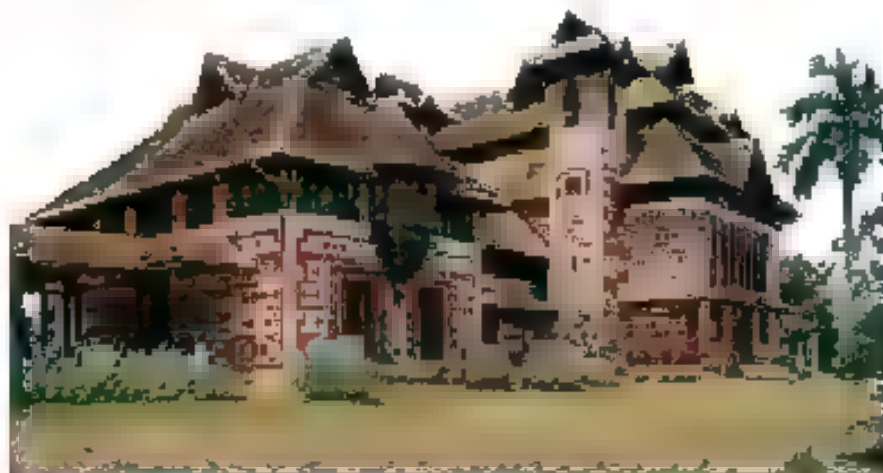


Thiruvananthapuram ①



Vishnu in wood

Kerala's capital, known until recently as Trivandrum, was the seat of the former royal family of Travancore from 1750 to 1956. The magnificent Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple has given the city its name, Thiruvananthapuram – literally the "Holy City of Anantha", the sacred thousand-headed serpent on whom Vishnu reclines. Built across seven hills, the city's old quarter clusters around the temple, while along busy Mahatma Gandhi Road are colonial mansions, churches and modern high-rises.



The Napier Museum, built in the 19th century

III Government Arts and Crafts (Napier) Museum

Museum Rd. ☑ Mon, (Wed am, & public hols for all museums. ☑ covers all museums. **Kanakakunnu Palace** Tel (0471) 231 8294 for permission. Located in a well-planned compound is a complex of museums and the city's zoo. The Government Arts and Crafts Museum, earlier known as the Napier Museum after John Napier, a former governor of Madras, is in a red and black brick Indo-Saracenic structure, designed by Robert Fellowes Chisholm (see p569) in the 19th century. It exhibits a rare collection of bronzes, stone sculptures, exquisite gold ornaments, ivory carvings

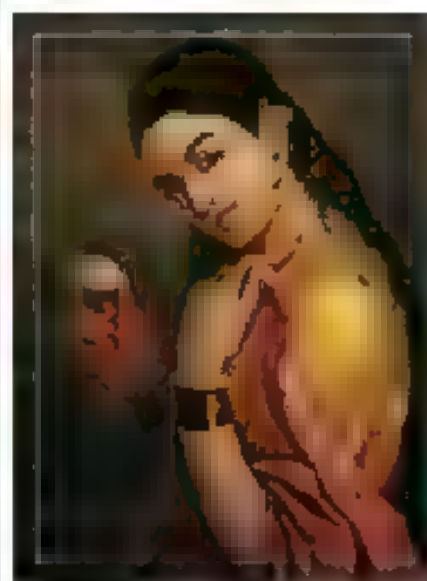
and a temple chariot, all fashioned in the territories of the former kingdom of Travancore.

To the north of the Museum, is the **Shri Chitra Art Gallery**, housed in a beautiful building that incorporates the best elements of local architecture. The pride of its collection are the works of Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906) and his uncle Raja Raja Varma, both pioneers of a unique academy style of painting in India. Raja Ravi Varma was considered the finest Indian artist of his time and his mythological paintings have inspired the popular religious prints found in many Indian homes

The **Natural History Museum** to the east, has a fine replica of a typical Kerala Nair wooden house *nalukettu*, detailing the principles of its construction.

The **Kanakakunnu Palace**, where the Travancore royal family once entertained their guests, is adjacent to the complex, on top of a hill.

A short drive down the road from the complex leads to Kowdiar Junction, a roundabout of walls and ornate railings facing the Kowdiar Palace, the former maharaja's official residence.



A painting by Raja Ravi Varma in Sri Chitra Art Gallery

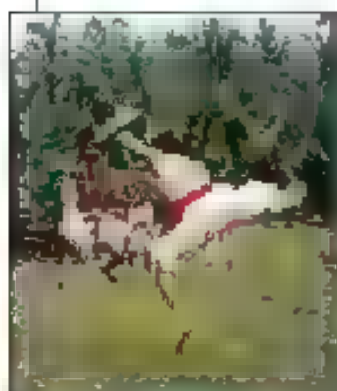
Mahatma Gandhi Road

The city's main road runs from the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall to the Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple. Among the many impressive buildings that line this road are the Secretariat, headquarters of the state government, the University College and the Public Library. The latter, founded in 1829, has a collection of more than 250,000 books and documents in Malayalam, Hindi, Tamil and Sanskrit. To the north, beyond the charming Connamara Market, are the Jamī Masjid, St Joseph's Cathedral and the Neo-Gothic building of Christ Church.

Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Fort area ☑ to non-Hindus. Special rules for clothing apply (see p762). Located within the fort that encircles the old town, this is the only temple in the state with a towering seven-storeyed *gopura*, commonly

MARTIAL ARTS OF KERALA



Kalarippayat practice, CVN Kalari Sangham

Constant warfare in the 11th century gave rise to *kalaripayattu*, Kerala's martial arts. From it emerged two streams – the *chavurpada*, suicide squads, and the *chekavan*, warriors who fought duels to the death, in order to settle the nobility's disputes. Students learn to use weapons such as swords, spears, daggers, the *urumi*, (a flexible metal sword) and wooden poles. In the final stage, the student is taught how to defeat an opponent by applying pressure to nerve points



The imposing gopura of the Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple

seen in Tamil Nadu's temple architecture. The restrained ornamentation, however, is typical of Kerala. A flagstaff encased in gold stands in the huge courtyard. The main corridor which runs around four sides of the courtyard, has 321 columns and two rows of granite pillars each embellished with a woman bearing a lamp (*deepalakshmi*). The hall also has mythological animals sculpted with rotating stone balls in their jaws. Rich murals adorn the outer walls of the inner shrine where the 6-m (20-ft) long reclining Vishnu resides, with his head towards the south and feet towards the north

III Kuthiramalika Palace Museum

Fort area ☐ Tue-Sun ☐ extra charges ☐ Carnatic Music Festival (Jan/Feb)

This interesting museum (also known as Puthen Malika) is housed in an 18th-century palace built by Raja Swathi Thiruna. Balarama Varma, a statesman, poet, musician and social reformer. A fine example of Kerala architecture, this wooden palace has polished floors and a sloping tiled roof. The wood carvings are particularly noteworthy, especially the 127 horses lining the eaves of the building. On display are various artifacts from the royal collection,

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Thiruvananthapuram district
708 km (440 miles) SW of
Chennai. ☐ 3,234,700 ☐ 6
km (4 miles) W of city centre, then
bus or taxi. ☐ ☐ ☐ Tourist
Facilitation Centre, Museum Rd,
(0471, 232 1132. TRC, opp
Chartram Hotel, (0471, 233 0031
☐ Mon-Sat ☐ Chandanakuda
(Mar/Apr), Navaratri (Sept/Oct),
Soorya Dance Festival (Oct)
Nishangandi Dance Festival (Nov)

including a solid crystal throne given by the Dutch, and another carved out of the tusks of 50 elephants

III CVN Kalari Sangham

East Fort area ☐ Mon-Sat ☐ ☐ This training centre for *kalaripayattu* was established in 1956 to revive Kerala's martial arts tradition. Each morning, students collect at the gymnasium (*kalari*) to perform a series of exercises that will help them develop the necessary combat skills. The centre also has a shrine to the deity of martial arts, Kalari Paradevata, and an Ayurvedic clinic where students are given oil massages

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM CITY CENTRE

Anantha Padmanabhaswamy
Temple ③

CVN Kalari Sangham ⑤

Government Arts and Crafts
(Napier) Museum ①

Kuthiramalika Palace Museum ④

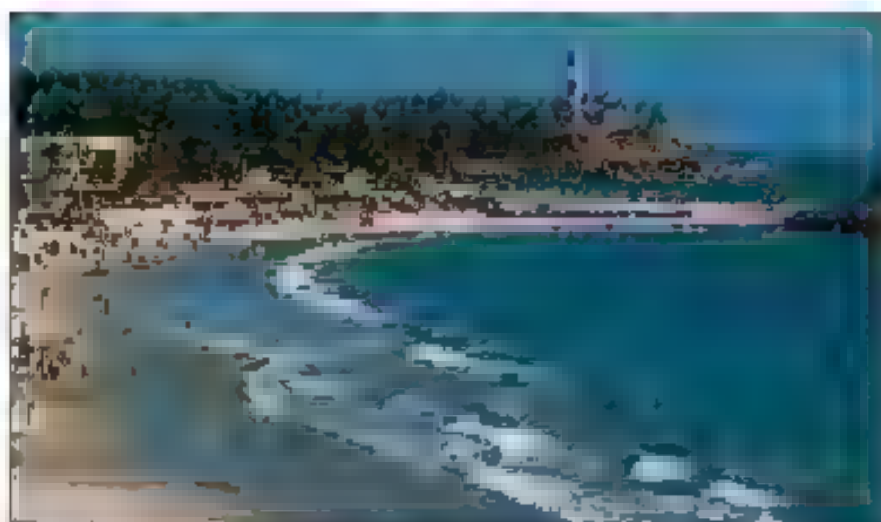
Mahatma Gandhi Road ②



Key to Symbols see back flap

Exploring Thiruvananthapuram's Environs

Thiruvananthapuram is the gateway to the southern tip of India. South of the city, along the Lakshadweep Sea, are many beach resorts, the most famous of which is Kovalam. The Padmanabhapuram Palace (see pp630–31), the former residence of the Travancore kings, is to the southeast, while to its north and east are tranquil hill stations located picturesquely in the densely forested Cardamom (Ponmudi) Hills. Thiruvananthapuram also houses many important institutions, including the meteorological station, which performs the task of plotting the arrival of the Southwest Monsoon. The city is also one of Kerala's main centres of Ayurveda.



Lighthouse Beach, one of the many idyllic beaches in Kovalam

Kovalam

Thiruvananthapuram district 16 km (10 miles) S of Thiruvananthapuram

Tourism Office (0471) 248 0085

Until the 1960s Kovalam was just a sleepy fishing village with narrow lanes and thatched dwellings with wide courtyards for drying fish. However, once its spectacular beach and shallow, crystal-clear waters were discovered, it became a favourite with hippies and backpackers, and over the years acquired the reputation of being a shabby downmarket resort. Today, however, it also attracts the rich and famous, who come here in private planes. As a result, the beaches are dotted with both

luxury and budget resorts, as well as cafes and several government-approved Ayurveda centres that offer anything from a simple massage to three-week treatments. Hawkers, too, have set up stalls selling handicrafts and inexpensive beachwear. Despite

the onslaughts of mass tourism, Kovalam retains an inherent charm that makes it one of India's finest and most popular beach resorts.

Kovalam's sheltered natural bay is ringed by two rocky headlands. Its four beaches – Samudra Beach, Asok Beach, Fives Beach and Lighthouse Beach – all within short walking distance of each other provide visitors with their fill of sun, sea and sand. While the beaches to the south of the promontory are more crowded, the ones to the north offer ample secluded space for sunbathing, safe swimming in the placid blue waters, caimanan trips, and water sports.



Bananas and other fruit on sale, Varkala



A young boy flaunts his catch, Kovalam Beach

Varkala

Thiruvananthapuram district 40 km (25 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram

Tourist Information Centre, near the helipad

This beautiful little beach town is better known among locals as a major pilgrimage centre. According to legend the sage Narada flung a cloth made from the bark of a tree into the air, and it landed at the spot where the small town of Varkala now stands. Narada then directed his disciples to pray for salvation at the newly created beach, which came to be known as Papanasham Beach or the

Beach of Redemption. Since then, this beach has been associated with ancestor worship, as Hindus immerse the ashes of their dead here.

At the heart of the town is the sacred **Janardhana Swamy Temple**, believed to be more than 2,000 years old. This temple, dedicated to Krishna, attracts many pilgrims. One of the gods in the temple is said to have been given in gratitude by the captain of a 17th-century Dutch sailing ship, after his prayers were answered.

Varkala's other pilgrimage centre is the hillock **Memorial of Sree Narayana Guru**

(1855–1928) at Sivagiri, 3 km (2 miles) east of the temple. Every day countless devotees flock to the memorial of this great saint and social reformer who advocated "one caste, one religion, one god for mankind."

With its backdrop of red laterite cliffs overlooking the beach, Varkala has now emerged as a popular resort.





A view of the long sandy beach at Varkala

and spa. The town is famous for its natural springs with therapeutic qualities, and is also a centre for Ayurvedic treatment and yoga. To the south is the desolate Anjengo Fort, the main garrison of the Dutch East India Company in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Ponmudi

Thiruvananthapuram district, 61 km (38 miles) NE of Thiruvananthapuram.

  **Government Guest House,** (0472) 280 230.

Ponmudi, literally "Golden Crown", rises to a height of 915 m (3 002 ft) from the base of a thick tropical forest. Surrounded by tea estates and forested hills, this hill station is still unspoilt, refreshingly cool and mist-shrouded for most of the year. Its narrow winding paths and verdant environs offer pleasant walks. Wild flowers grow in abundance on the banks of gurgling brooks, adding to the charm of this peaceful place.

Agasthyarkoodam

Thiruvananthapuram district, 60 km (37 miles) NE of Thiruvananthapuram.

Trekking permits Contact the Office of the Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram, (0471) 232 9925.

At an elevation of 1,890 m (6,201 ft), Agasthyarkoodam is the highest peak in southern Kerala. It forms part of the Western Ghats and the Agasthyavanam Forest, designated a sanctuary in 1992.

The mountain is revered by both Buddhists and Hindus, as it is believed to be the abode of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (see p141), as well as of the sage Agastya, a disciple of Shiva. Women are not allowed here. The hills are rich in medicinal herbs, and harbour many species of birds and wildlife. Trekking to the top – a distance of 28 km (17 miles) – takes two days and is permitted only between December and April. The summit provides fine views of the lake created by the Neyyar Dam.

AYURVEDA THERAPY



Ayurvedic treatment in progress

carry the honorific title of *ashtavaidyan*. Today, this holistic science of healing is practised throughout India. However, the Kerala method is famous for its five-pronged treatment *panchakarma*, in which medicated oils, herbs, milk, massage and a special diet are used to cure all types of ailments.

A classical text on medicine, the *Ashtangahridaya*, is the foundation of Ayurveda in Kerala. Its author, Vagbhata, was the disciple of a Buddhist physician, and received little recognition in the rest of India. It is believed that a few Nampoothiri (Brahmin) families were the original Ayurvedic physicians, and their descendants still

FESTIVALS OF KERALA

Vishu (Apr) The first day of the Malayali New Year is celebrated with zest throughout the state. It is believed that looking upon a group of auspicious objects at dawn ensures a year of peace and prosperity.

Thrissur Pooram

(Apr/May), Thrissur. The highlight of this festival is the ceremonial procession of two *devis* (goddesses) on caparisoned elephants to the Vadakkunnathan Temple. The parasols held above the elephants are changed in an exciting synchronized ritual, accompanied by *chenda-melam*, an orchestra of percussion instruments. A display of fireworks marks the climax.

Onam (Aug/Sep) The most popular of Kerala's festivals. It honours Mahabali, a selfless ruler whose subjects were so content that envious gods tricked him into losing his life and kingdom. His last wish was to visit his people once a year to ensure that they were happy. During Onam, an aura of plenty is created to gladden Mahabali's heart. Great feasts are prepared, new clothes worn, and courtyards are decorated with floral patterns (*athapookkalam*). The Nehru Trophy Boat Race (see p36) is held at this time.



Caparisoned elephants and musicians, Thrissur Pooram

Padmanabhapuram Palace ②

Set amid lush hills, verdant paddy fields and perennial rivers, Padmanabhapuram Palace is the finest example of Kerala's distinctive wooden architecture. Laid out in a sequence of four adjoining walled compounds, comprising public and private zones, the palace has richly carved wooden ceilings, sculpted pillars, slatted windows, and pagoda-like tiled roofs. From 1590 to 1790 Padmanabhapuram was the home of the former princely state of Travancore, which straddled parts of present-day Tamil Nadu as well as Kerala. By some quirk of fate, this beautifully kept palace now falls in Tamil Nadu but is maintained by the government of Kerala.



Detail from a carved rosewood door



★ Prayer Hall

The prayer hall, on the third floor of the King's Palace, has exquisite murals on its walls. A medicinal bed here, carved from 64 different types of wood, was a gift from the Dutch.



Entrance Hall

The entrance hall has a profusely carved wooden ceiling with 90 different inverted flowers, a polished granite bed and an ornate Chinese throne.

Main Gate

The main entrance to the palace complex is reached after crossing a large courtyard. This gate has a decorated gabled roof.

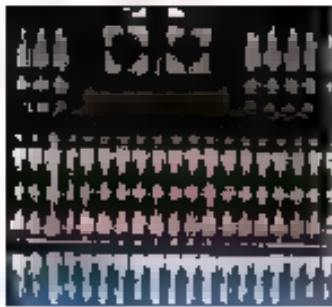


The Lady's Chamber houses two large swings, a pair of enormous Belgian mirrors and a royal bed.

The clock tower's chimes could be heard from a distance of 3 km (2 miles).

Entrance

0 metres 20
0 yards 20



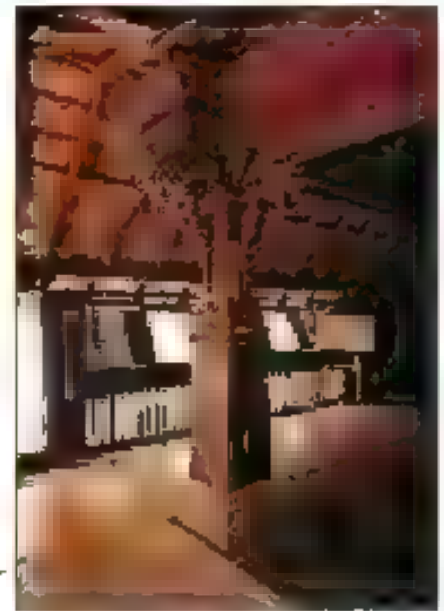
Carved bay window for watching processions

Guest house

The Bath House is a small airy room, where the male members of the royal family were given a massage before they descended, down covered steps, to a private tank to bathe

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Tamil Nadu state, Kanniyakumari district, 52 km (32 miles) SE of Thiruvananthapuram ☎ Tel (04651) 250 255. ☐ Tue–Sun ☎ ☎ extra charges. ☎



★ Mother's Palace

Built in 1550, this is the oldest building in the complex. It contains intricately carved wooden pillars fashioned from the wood of the jackfruit tree. The floor was polished to a red glass with hibiscus flowers.



Lamp

A horse lamp (the horse is a symbol of valour) in the entrance hall, hangs suspended from a special chain that keeps the lamp perfectly balanced.

The dining hall laid out over two storeys, could seat 2,000 guests.

The palace museum houses artifacts including furniture, wooden and granite statues, coins, weapons and utensils.

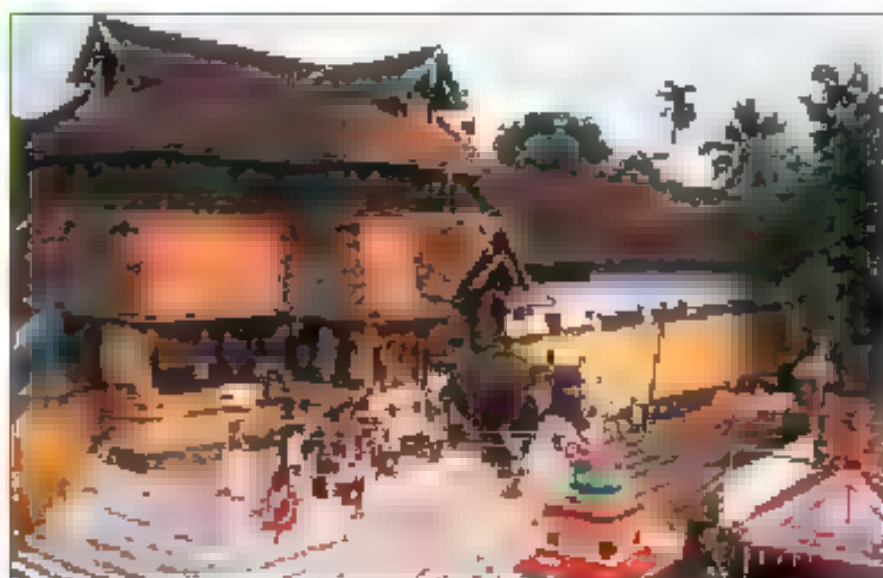


STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Prayer Hall
- ★ Mother's Palace
- ★ Council Chamber

★ Council Chamber

The king's council chamber has wooden louvers to let in light and air. The gloss on the floor was achieved with a mixture of lime, sand, egg white, coconut water, charcoal and jaggery.



An elephant being led down the steps of Aranmula's Parthasarathy Temple

Aranmula ❸

Pathanamthitta district, 125 km (78 miles) NW of Thiruvananthapuram
 from Alappuzha. Onam Boat Regatta (Aug/Sep).

The picturesque village of Aranmula, situated on the banks of the Pampa river, is famous as the venue for Kerala's magnificent snake boat races. The boat race festival has its origins in the legend of a devotee who once gave food to a Brahmin, believed to be Vishnu in disguise. However, the Brahmin, before disappearing, advised him to send his offering to Aranmula instead. Since then, during the festival, a ceremonial boat, carved out of a single block of wood, carries a consignment of food from a nearby village to the temple at Aranmula.

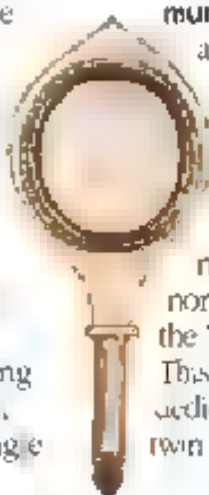
On the last day of Onam (see p629), this ceremonial boat leads a procession of about 30 snake boats to the temple. On this day, there is no racing and all the boats arrive together, as Krishna is said to be present on each boat at the same time.

The **Parthasarathy Temple**, one of the state's five most important temples, is dedicated to Krishna, and has an image of the god as Parthasarathy, the Divine Chanoteer in the great epic, the *Mahabharata*. The image was brought here on a raft made of six bamboos, and this is what the town's name signifies – in Malayalam *aaru* means six and *mula*, bamboo.

Aranmula is also known for its unique metal mirrors made from an alloy of silver, bronze, copper and lead. These mirrors were traditionally used as part of the arrangement of auspicious objects during Vishu, the Malayali New Year, in April. (see p629).

Enviroms

The 14th-century **Thiruvamundur Temple**, near Chengannur, 11 km (4 miles) west of Aranmula, is dedicated to Krishna and attributed to Nakul, one of the five Pandava brothers (see p26). Near Chengannacherry, 27 km (17 miles) northwest of Aranmula, is the **Tirukkodittanam Temple**. This 11th-century temple is dedicated to Sahadev, Nakul's twin brother and has lovely murals adorning its walls. It is a temple vibrant in traditional art and music.



Metal mirror, Aranmula

Mannarsala ❶

Alappuzha district, 132 km (82 miles) NW of Thiruvananthapuram, (0479) 241 3214 Thulam (Oct/Nov).

The custom of worshipping snakes in Kerala reaches a climax at Mannarsala, the best known of the four main Naga temples in the state. According to legend, a woman from a family of great Naga devotees gave birth to two sons, one of whom was a serpent-child, who asked his family to worship him and vanished. The temples at Mannarsala, dedicated to the King of Snakes, Nagaraja, and his consort, Sarpayakshini, are situated in a thick grove of tall trees and dense bushes, surrounded by thousands of hooded stone serpents of various styles and sizes.

In Kerala, the ancestral home (*tharavad*) of every upper-class Nambuthuri and Nair family is supposed to have a *sarpa-kavu* or snake-grove, housing a *nagaval* or snake stone. If a *tharavad* cannot afford to maintain its own shrine, the snake stones are offered to this temple.

The holy rites at Mannarsala are conducted by a priestess (*amma*), a vestal virgin, who lives on the premises and is supported in her religious duties by her family.

Childless couples place a bell metal vessel (*kurulu*) face down in front of the deities, to seek their blessings.

SACRED SERPENT SHRINES

In Kerala, the sacred serpent plays a significant role in belief and ritual. Malayali folklore speaks of a wooded, rural land inhabited mainly by Nagas (snakes) – the Lords of the Underworld – who were overthrown by the Brahmin settlers brought here by Parasurama (see p679), the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. This mythological incident is the origin of snake worship in Kerala since, after their defeat, Parasurama ordered that snakes be accorded divine status. Most temples thus have a niche for a snake god, and dense sacred groves of ancient trees. The old ancestral homes (*tharavads*) also have private temples or groves for a snake deity.



Sacred grove with snake (naga) images, Mannarsala Temple

Boats of Kerala

Kerala's ancient boat building industry is a specialized part of its rich wood working tradition that also includes architecture (see p638). Boats built at Beypore (see p653) were highly prized and used by Arab merchants. The construction of a boat is always begun on an auspicious day in the Malayalam



Dugouts with carved sterns

calendar, and is marked by an invocation to the gods. The most sought after wood is *anjili* (*Artocarpus hirsuta*), though teak is also used. Racing boats of various sizes and shapes participate in the annual Onam regatta at Aranmula. Of these, the most magnificent is the long, narrow *chundanvallam*, or snake boat.



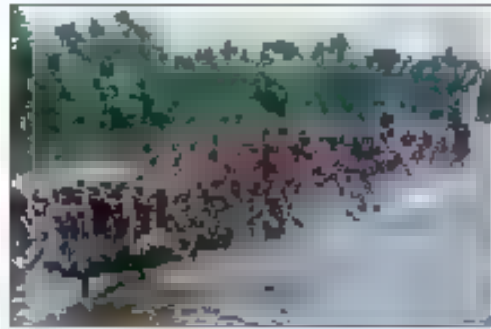
BOAT BUILDING

A master craftsman, assisted by a team traditionally drawn from different regions, builds the boat. No nails or metal pieces are used; only wooden pegs and joints hold the parts together.

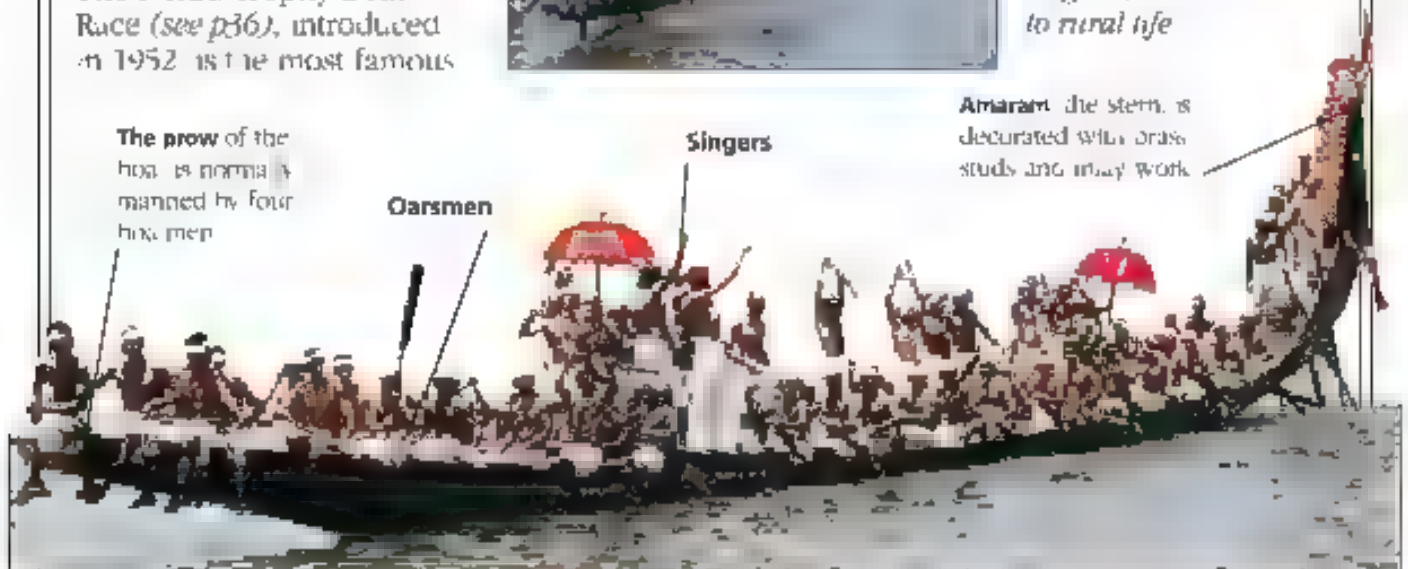


SNAKE BOAT RACES

Snake boats (*chundan-vallam*), once used to carry warriors, now participate in what is believed to be the world's largest team sport. The Nehru Trophy Boat Race (see p36), introduced in 1952, is the most famous.



Rowing is perfectly synchronized to the pulsating rhythm of *vanchipattu* (boatmen's songs). Their themes are devotional, mythological, or related to rural life.



The prow of the boat is normally manned by four men.

Oarsmen

Singers

Anaram, the stern, is decorated with brass studs and may work.



Kettuvaliams are now often converted into houseboats. *Kettu* means a bundle, while *vallam* is a big boat. Originally, these were used as ferries or to carry rice.



Canoes, usually made from a single log of wood, can carry no more than one or two people. They are commonly used to transport light cargo, such as coir fibre.

Backwaters Tour ⑤

A cruise along the backwaters is one of the most enchanting experiences that Kerala offers. Exploring this labyrinthine network of waterways, which weave through villages set amidst lush vegetation, offers glimpses of Kerala's unique rural lifestyle where land and water are inseparable. The most popular backwaters tour is from Kollam (Quilon), situated between Ashtamudi Lake and the Arabian Sea, to Alappuzha (Aleppey) on the edge of Vembanad Lake. The choice of transport ranges from local ferries and speedboats to *kettuvallams* (see p633).



LOCATOR MAP

Water hyacinths are the cause of a serious ecological problem since untamed growth has clogged the waterways of Kuttanad, the rice bowl of Kerala.



Children going to school by boat are a common sight. Various types of boats are used as transport along the backwaters, connecting the small villages with the mainland.

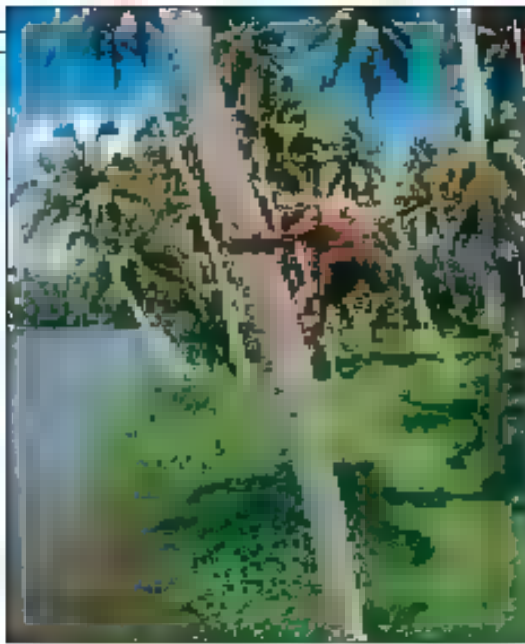


Houses along a canal have jetties with moored boats. The ground and water levels are often equal, which makes flooding a problem during the monsoon.

Coconut palms fringe the waterways. In addition to coconuts, rice is cultivated extensively in Kuttanad, the area between Kottavaram and Alappuzha.




Coconut Lagoon (see p715) is a wintering resort on Vembanad Lake near the bird sanctuary in Kumarakom.




Toddy tappers are expert at scaling coconut palms. The local brew, made from fermented coconut palm sap, is sold in shacks along the waterways. The first brew is light and delicious; however, potency levels rise with subsequent fermentation.

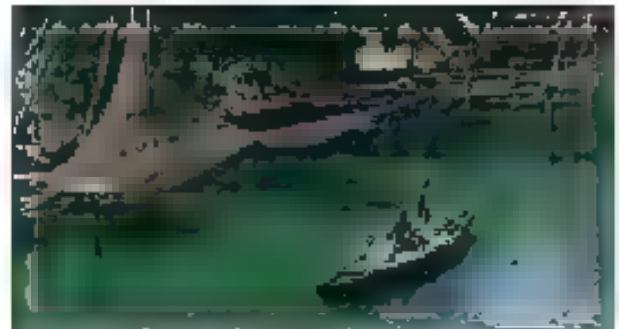
TIPS FOR PASSENGERS

Route 1 Kollam to Alappuzha

Dep. 10:30am. Maximum duration: 8 hrs.  District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC), Kollam, (0474) 274 5625

Route 2: Alappuzha to Kollam

Dep. 10:30am. Maximum duration: 8 hrs.  DTPC, Alappuzha, (0477) 225 3308
For more details see p781



Chinese fishing nets along the backwaters are used to trap fish. A popular fish in Kerala, karimeen (pearl spot), is found in these waters.



Children with banana trunks playing in the water.

BACKWATERS

According to legend, Parasurama, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, created Kerala by throwing his battle axe into the sea. The abundance of canals, lagoons and lakes in the state seem to reinforce this legend of a land born from the sea.



In this coir-producing village, women beat the husk and spin the fibre to make ropes or floor coverings. The fibre is often dyed to create brightly coloured mats with geometric designs.








Coconut husks soak in the shallow waters near the banks. This softens the husks before they are beaten to produce the fine fibre that is turned into coir. The flesh is converted into oil, or used in cooking.





Kottayam 6

Kottayam district, 160 km (99 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram.  60,750    District Tourist Promotion Council, (0481, 256 0479)  Drama Festival (Jan.)

Enclosed by the blue waters of Vembanad Lake and the paddy fields of Kuttanad to its west, and by the lush hills of the Western Ghats to its east, Kottayam is one of Kerala's most beautiful districts. Its climate and landscape have combined to make the region prosperous. Kottayam town is surrounded by extensive plantations of rubber, and other valuable cash crops such as tea, coffee, cardamom and pepper. The first town in India to attain 100 per cent literacy, it is also the birthplace of Kerala's publishing industry and home to many Malayalam newspapers and magazines. A writers' co-operative society, the Sahitya Pravarthaka Samakarama Sangham, which was set up here more than 50 years ago, has played a cardinal role in fostering the growth of Malayalam literature.

Kottayam also has an old Christian tradition that has been preserved by its large Syrian Christian population. It was one of the first towns to be patronised by St Thomas (see p173) in the 1st century AD. Of the many fine churches and seminaries that dot the landscape, the best known are the two Syrian Orthodox churches, **Valia Palli** and **Cheria Palli**, both dating to the mid-16th century. The



Mural from the stately Shiva temple at Ettumanur

churches stand on a hillock, about 2 km (1.2 miles) north of the city centre, and have colourful frescoes adorning their walls. The Nestorian cross at Valia Palli is said to have come from Kerala's first church, founded by St Thomas at Kodungalur (see p649). Cheria Palli has painted panes in its windows and its main altar depicting scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary.



Nestorian cross at Valia Palli Church, Kottayam

Environs

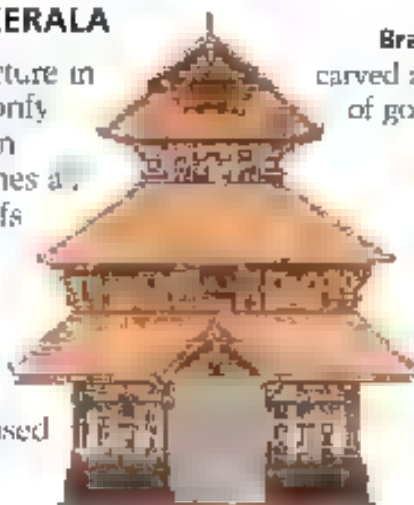
Mannanam, 8 km (5 miles) north of Kottayam, is a pilgrim centre for Syrian Christians, who gather in their thousands each January to attend a religious convention, one of the largest in Asia.

Kumarakom, a Hindu sanctuary on the banks of Vembanad Lake, is 12 km (7 miles) west of Kottayam. A great variety of birds can be observed from vantage points.

A large temple dedicated to Shiva at **Ettumanur**, 2 km (7 miles) north of Kottayam, has beautiful murals similar to those found at Mattancherry Palace in Kochi (see p642). The 11th-century Mahadeva Temple at **Vaikom**, 40 km (25 miles) north-west of Kottayam, is famous for its elephant pageants and traditional dance performances, which take place between November and December each year. It is also the site where Mahatma Gandhi led an important *satyagraha* (civil disobedience movement) to make temples accessible to untouchables.

WOODEN ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA

The importance of wooden architecture in Kerala is evident in legends that glorify the master carpenter, Perunthachan. Palaces, temples, mosques and homes all have characteristic sloping tiled roofs to drain away the heavy rains during the monsoon. Roofs are generally hipped, often with decorated gables topped by brass pot finials. To achieve height, they rise in two or more superimposed tiers to create steeply pyramidal profiles. Joints and wooden pegs, instead of nails, are used.



Temple with pyramidal roof

Brackets are often carved as *valis* or figures of gods and goddesses.



Wooden pillars are ornate. These are decorative as well as functional, as they support the roof.





The Baroque façade of St Thomas Church, at Palai

Sabarimalai ⑦

Pattanamthitta district 191 km (119 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram to Pamba, then by foot Mandalam (Dec/Jan), Makaravilakku (mid-Jan)

One of the most famous pilgrimage centres in India, Sabarimalai lies in the Western Ghats at an altitude of 914 m (2,999 ft). The final 14-km (9-mile) approach from Pamba, through dense forest is made on foot.

The focus of devotion here is the temple dedicated to the popular deity, Ayyappa. The temple stays open from November to mid-January. In April and during the first five days of each month of the Malayalam calendar. People of all religions can worship here, but women between the ages of 10 and 50 are restricted from entering. The final 18 sacred steps (each representing a sin that a devotee renounces on setting foot on it) are sheathed in *panchaloba*, an alloy of five metals, and lead to the

sanctum. Only those who have observed 41 days of penance (celibacy, wearing black and not shaving) are entitled to undertake the pilgrimage.

Periyar Tiger Reserve ⑧

See pp640–41

THE AYYAPPA CULT

A Dravidian deity worshipped throughout Kerala, Ayyappa (or Sastha), was born out of the union between Shiva and Vishnu, who had transformed himself into a woman (Mouri). The baby, found on the banks of the Pamba river, was adopted by the childless king of Pandalam. Ayyappa later revealed his divine status when he destroyed a demon. Before returning to his heavenly abode, however, the god shot an arrow into the air which landed near the ashram of the sage Sabari, where a temple was built. Ayyappa's warrior friend, Vavar, is a Muslim saint whose *dargah* nearby is visited by both Muslims and Hindus.

Palai ⑨

Kottayam district 175 km (109 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram Epiphany (6 Jan), St Thomas Church (Malayalam, 6am daily)

The prosperous town of Palai is surrounded by thick rubber plantations. The small but beautiful, 16th-century **St Thomas Church** is its principal attraction. Constructed in the traditional style of early Christian churches in Kerala, it has a quaint wooden pulpit with a fish-like base, an elaborately carved main altar and two simpler side altars. A stone slab carries inscriptions in Syriac. Attractive glass candles are suspended from wall brackets, while a chandelier hangs from the ceiling. There is a wooden balcony at the rear. Services are still held in the church. Adjoining this building is a modern church, also dedicated to St Thomas.



Ayyappa devotees, Sabarimalai



Ceilings are divided into panels carved with lotus designs or Hindu deities, such as Brahma, surrounded by *dakshinis* (guardian figures).

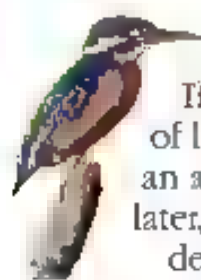


Kootambulams, traditional theatres, are usually situated in the precincts of large temples and palaces. They serve as the venue for staging Koodiyattam (dance-drama) performances.



Interiors of kootambulams have tall wooden pillars and *fajis* on three sides for ventilation. The roof is specially designed to provide excellent acoustic quality.

Periyar Tiger Reserve

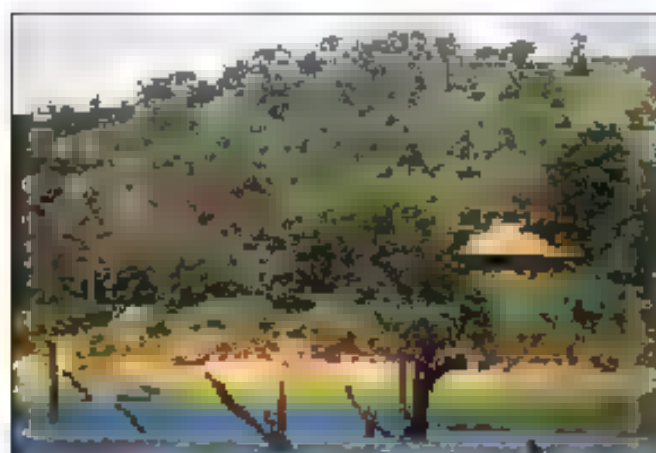


Common
kingfisher

The construction of the Mullaperiyar Dam across the Periyar river at Thekkady, in 1895, submerged large tracts of land and created a huge lake covering an area of 26 sq km (10 sq miles). Years later, in 1935, the then Maharaja of Travancore declared 600 sq km (232 sq miles) of forest surrounding the lake a wildlife sanctuary. The Periyar Lake now forms the nucleus of the ecosystem of the sanctuary which, over the years, has been expanded to 777 sq km (300 sq miles). Declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978, the sanctuary is a rare example of human interference having enhanced rather than damaged an ecosystem.



Visitors viewing wildlife from a boat on Periyar Lake



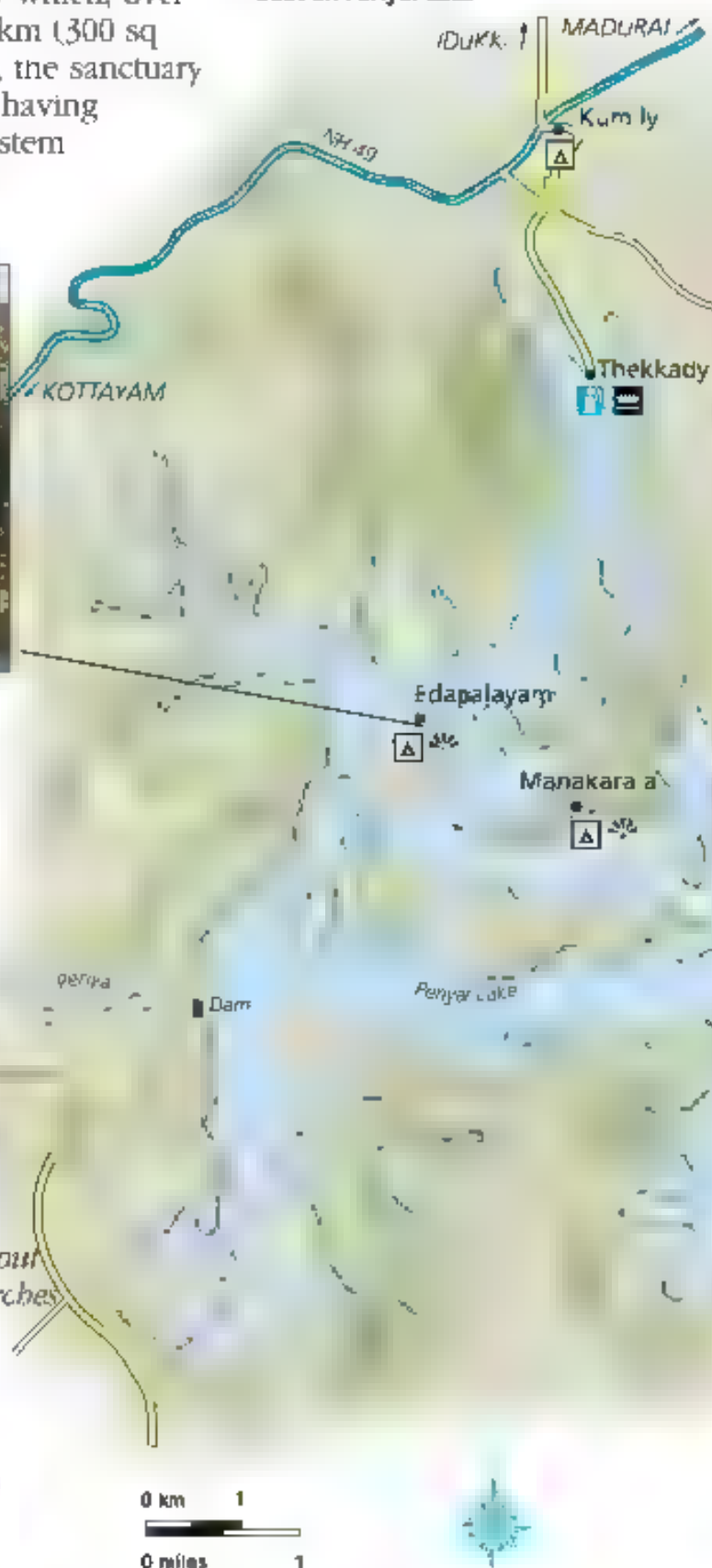
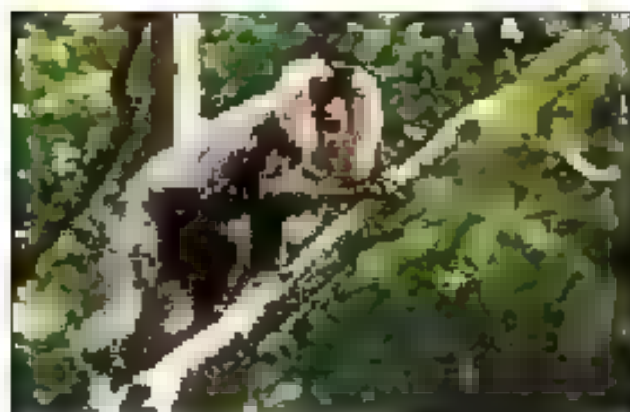
Lake Palace

The former hunting lodge of the Maharaja of Travancore is now a delightful hotel inside the sanctuary (see p716)



Birdlife

The petrified tree trunks that jut out from the lake make convenient perches for birds looking out for fish



Wildlife

The deciduous forests, grasslands and tropical evergreen interiors of Periyar are the habitat of the endangered lion-tailed macaque (left), as well as Indian bison (gaur), sloth bears and the slender lorises



Herds of Elephants

The lake, a year-round source of water, and the abundant grassland make the sanctuary an ideal habitat for elephants, which now number approximately 800

Mangaladevi Temple

The Mangaladevi Temple 15 km (5 miles) east of Thekkady lies at a height of 1 337 m (4 387 ft) and offers excellent panoramic views of the forested hills of the Ghats.

Mullakady

Thannkudi

Periyar

KEY

National highway

Major road

Minor road

Jetty

Tourist information

Viewpoint

Temple

Accommodation

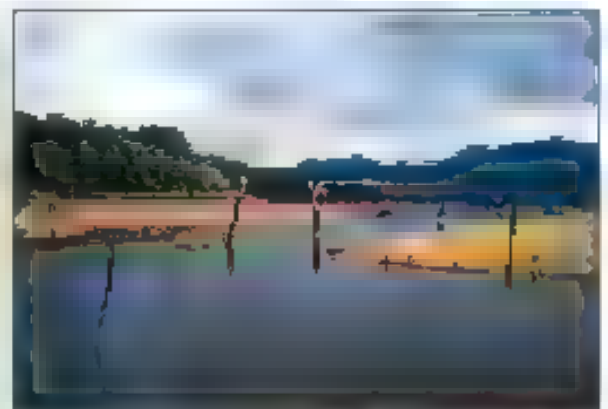
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Idukki district, 190 km (118 miles) N of Kochi Forest Divisional Office, Kumily (04869) 22 2028, Tourist Information Centre, Kumily (04869, 22 2620)



Indian Giant Squirrel

This agile squirrel can make amazing leaps that cover about 6 m (20 ft). It is found in Periyar's deciduous and evergreen forests



Periyar Lake

Two-hour boat cruises on the mist shrouded lake offer excellent opportunities for spotting wildlife, especially herds of elephants

Orchids

*Periyar is known for its many species of flowering plants, including nearly 150 species of orchids. The rare orchid *Habenaria periyarancis*, named after the region, is found only here*



Kochi ●



Antique mask

Kochi, better known as Cochin, is Kerala's most cosmopolitan city. It is also its main trading centre for spices and seafood. Built around a saltwater lagoon of the Arabian Sea, Kochi is in fact a collection of narrow islands and peninsulas. While mainland Ernakulam boasts of concrete shopping malls and glitzy apartment buildings, Mattancherry and Fort Kochi have an old world charm, with their blend of Dutch, Portuguese and English bungalows and quaint narrow streets (see pp644–5). The scenic location of Kochi's natural harbour, surrounded by palm groves, green fields, inland lakes and backwaters, has enchanted visitors from across the globe for centuries.



Brahma emerging from Vishnu's navel, mural, Mattancherry Palace

☐ Mattancherry Palace

Jew Town. Tel (0484) 222 6085.

☐ Sat–Thu

The Mattancherry Palace, constructed by the Portuguese in the mid-1550s, was given to the ruler of Cochin as a token of goodwill in exchange for trading rights. It was later renovated by the Dutch, and so gained the misnomer, Dutch Palace. The two-storeyed structure, built around a courtyard with a small shrine to the goddess Bhagavati, is today a museum with a rare collection of murals and royal artifacts.

In the central Darbar Hall where coronation ceremonies were once held, is the portrait

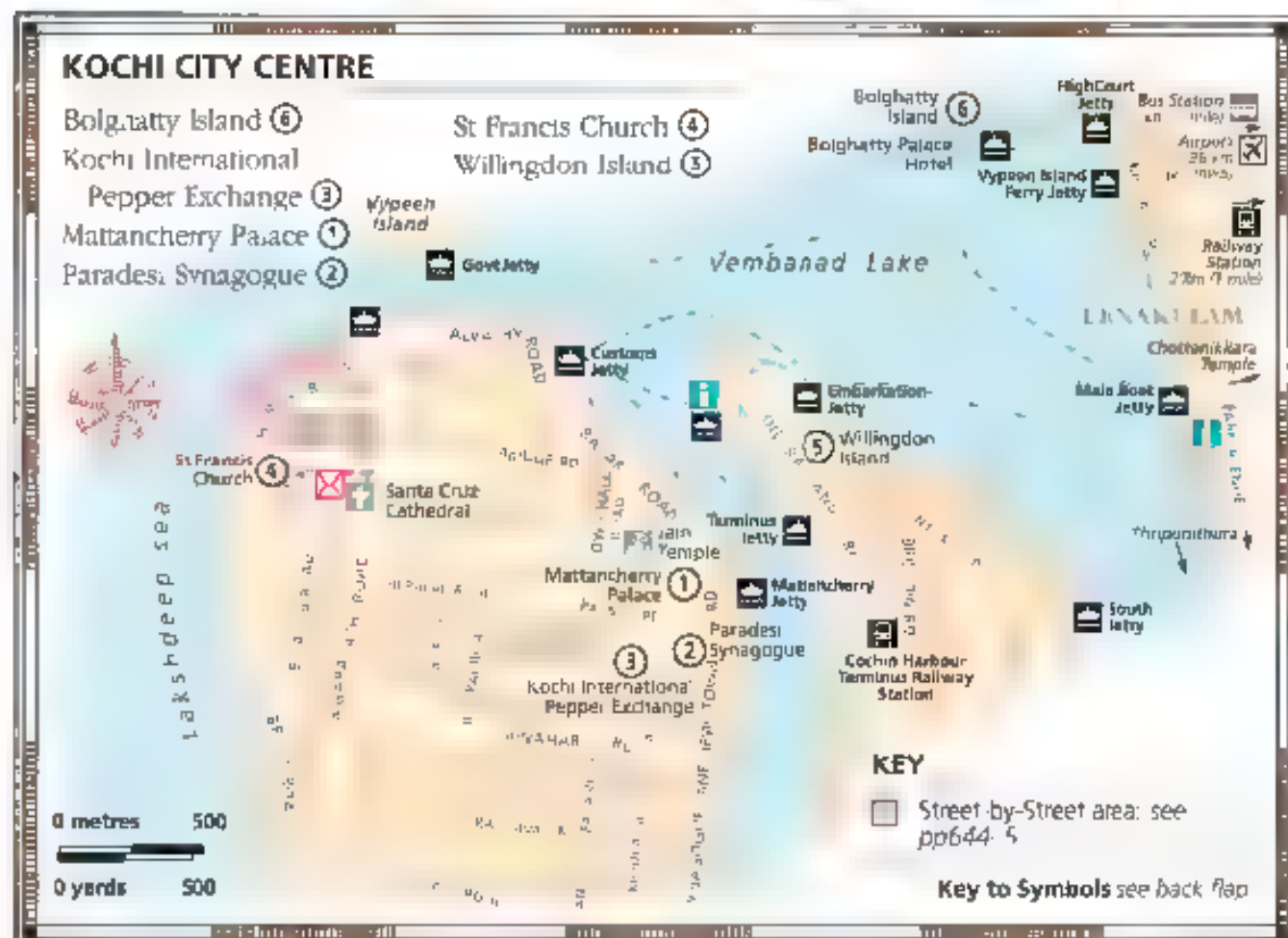
gallery of the Kochi rulers; it also displays palanquins and textiles. The adjacent bedrooms and chambers are renowned for their fine 17th-century murals, representative of Kerala's temple art. Painted in rich warm shades of red, yellow, black and white, they depict religious and mythological themes as well as episodes from the *Ramayana*.

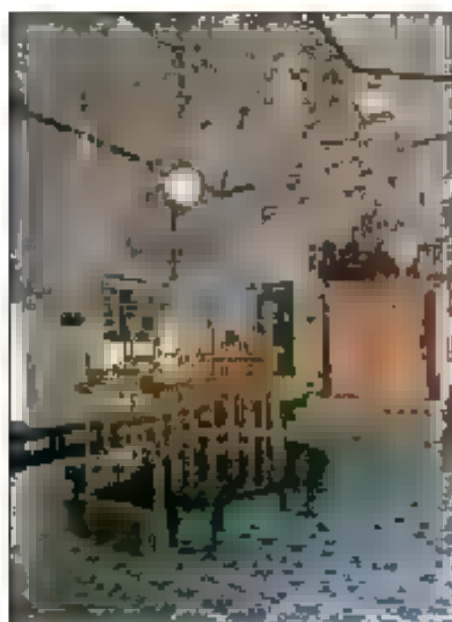
★ Paradesi Synagogue

Jew Town. ☐ Sun–Fri. ☐

Nesting in a cul-de-sac at the end of a narrow lane in the heart of Jew Town, is India's oldest synagogue. The first Jewish settlers are said to have reached Kodungallur (see p649) in the 1st century AD. Their settlement, then known as Shingly, prospered over the centuries.

However, persecution by the Portuguese in the early 16th century forced them to migrate to Cochin, where they settled on land given by the raja, and built a synagogue in 1568. Cochin's Jewish community was divided into two distinct groups – the so-called Black or Malabar Jews who claimed to be descendants of the original settlers, and the White or Paradesim Jews who came here from the Middle East, and after whom





Main hall with brass pulpit and blue-tiled floor, Paradesi Synagogue

the synagogue is named A third, smaller group was the Brown or Meshuhuram Jews, descended from converted slaves, many of whom were in the spice trade. In 1940, there were 250 Jews in Kerala, but today only a dozen families remain, the rest having migrated to Israel.

The present synagogue, with its tiled roof and clock tower, was rebuilt in 1664 with Dutch help, after the Portuguese destroyed it in 1662. The synagogue's treasures include beautiful silver and gold Torah scrolls, a multitude of hanging oil lamps and crystal chandeliers, and a superbly crafted brass pulpit. The floor is covered with exquisite hand-painted blue willow-pattern tiles, which were brought from Canton in the mid-18th century by a powerful merchant, Ezekiel Raham.

The narrow lanes around the synagogue are crammed with Dutch-style residences. Today, most of these house antique shops.




Antique shops lining the narrow lanes in Jew Town

Kochi International Pepper Exchange

Jew Town. **Tel** (0484) 222 4263. *Passes required to enter hall.*  Mon-Sat. This unique establishment reverberates with voices, seemingly raised in anger, as one ascends the stairs. However, nothing prepares the visitor for what lies within – the small hall is lined with tiny cubicles, each with a man talking animatedly on a telephone. Theatrical gestures accompanied by a loud cacophony of sounds mark the drama of each day's pepper auction.

St Francis Church

Fort Kochi.  Mon-Sat.

 (English, 8am, daily).







Established in the early 1500s by the Portuguese (who called it Santo Antonio) this is one of India's earliest European churches, with a simple façade that became the model for later churches. Taken over by the Dutch and then the British, it is today affiliated to the Church of South India.

Within are numerous grave-stones with inscriptions, the earliest a Portuguese captain dated 1562. Vasco da Gama (see p653) was buried here in 1524 until his body was taken to Portugal 14 years later.

Willington Island

This man-made island, named after the viceroy Lord Willington, was created in the 1920s out of silt dredged to deepen Kochi port. Situated between Fort Kochi, Malancherry and Ernakulam, it has some good hotels, as well as the main harbour, the Port Trust building, the customs house and the railway station. It is also an important naval base.


VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Ernakulam district 222 km (138 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram
 596,500  36 km (22 miles) E of city centre, then bus or taxi
  Tourist Information Centre, (0484) 236 0502; TRC, near Ernakulam jetty (0484) 235 3234
 Onam (Aug/Sep),
 Utsavam (Nov/Dec)



The gracious façade of Bolghatty Palace, now a hotel

Bolghatty Island

Bolghatty Palace Hotel **Tel** (0484) 275 0500  open to non-residents.

A narrow strip of land, this beautiful island with breathtaking views of the bay is the location of Bolghatty Palace. Set in 6 ha (15 acres) of lush green lawns, this palatial structure was originally built by the Dutch in 1744 and later became the home of the British Resident. It has now been converted into a hotel run by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (see p 714).

Environs

Kochi's bustling business centre, **Ernakulam**, is 10 km (6 miles) east of Fort Kochi. The Hill Palace at **Thripunithura**, 10 km (6 miles) southeast of Ernakulam, was built in 1895 and was the official residence of the former rulers of Cochin. The palace, set in spacious grounds, is now a museum with a fairly good collection of paintings, manuscripts and royal memorabilia. The exquisite floor tiles differ from room to room, and the sweeping wooden staircases have a grandeur all of their own. The 10th-century **Chottanikkara Temple**, dedicated to the mother goddess Bhagavati, one of Kerala's most popular deities, is 16 km (10 miles) northeast of Ernakulam.

Thripunithura Museum

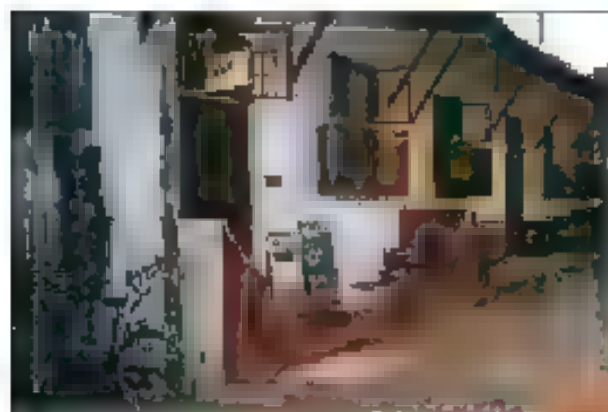
Tel (0484) 278 1113  Tue-Sun.

Street-by-Street: Fort Kochi

Kochi's natural harbour, created by a massive flood in 1341, attracted imperialists and merchants from all over the world. In the 16th century, the Portuguese built a fort here, which was later occupied by the Dutch and then the British. Today, this quarter, with its mixture of architectural styles, encapsulates Fort Kochi's tumultuous history. The most important building here is St Francis Church, erected by the Portuguese in 1502 and considered to be among the oldest churches built by Europeans in India. This area has now been declared a Heritage Zone to preserve its many historic buildings.



★ **Santa Cruz Cathedral**
Built in 1887, this cathedral has impressive murals on its ceiling.



★ **Kashi Art Café**
This charming restaurant, in an old Dutch building, houses an art gallery.



★ **Koder House**
The residence of Satu Koder, patriarch of Kochi's Jews, was built by his ancestors in 1808. It has now been converted into a boutique hotel.



★ **Chinese Fishing Nets**
First erected between 1350 and 1450, these cantilevered fishing nets indicate trade links with China.



Peter Celli Street
Many hotels and shops
are located here



Bishop's House

Once the Portuguese governor's house, this 16th-century structure is now home to Kochi's bishop



United Club, once a British club, now houses a school

Bishop's House

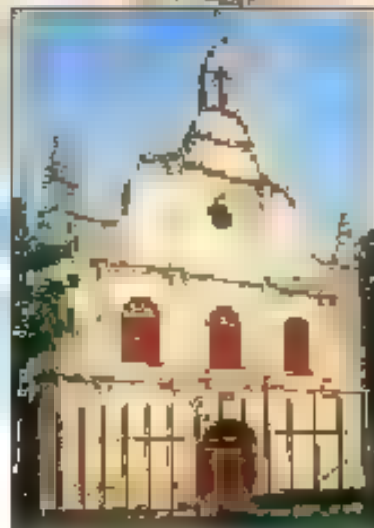


Malabar House Residency

This historic house is now a wonderful hotel (see p715)

The Dutch cemetery

★ **St Francis Church**
Vasco da Gama was buried here in 1524 before his body was taken to Portugal



KEY

--- Suggested route

STAR SIGHTS

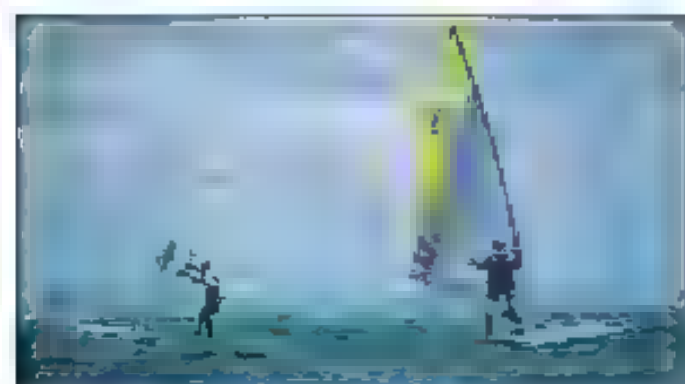
- ★ Santa Cruz Cathedral
- ★ Chinese Fishing Nets
- ★ St Francis Church

Lakshadweep Islands ①



Bird of paradise

Formerly the Laccadives, the Lakshadweep Islands are an archipelago of 36 exquisite coral islands, with untouched beaches and verdant coconut groves, scattered off the Kerala coast in the Arabian Sea. With a total land area of only 32 sq km (12 sq miles), Lakshadweep (which means 100,000 islands) is the smallest Union Territory in India. The atolls enclose shallow lagoons harbouring India's richest diversity of coral varieties and a multitude of colourful reef fish. Only two islands, Bangaram and Kadmat, are open to foreign visitors, while Indian visitors have a choice of six; all offer superb snorkeling and scuba diving.



Wind-surfing in the Lakshadweep Islands

Kavaratti Island

450 km (280 miles) W of Kochi.

✈️ 🇮🇳 to Indian passport holders only 🏠

Lakshadweep's administrative headquarters, Kavaratti is the busiest island, and home to a large number of mainlanders, most of whom work for the government. It has beautiful white beaches and its crystal-clear lagoon is popular with water sports enthusiasts.

There are 52 mosques on the island that cater to the predominantly Muslim population. The **Ujra Mosque** has an ornate ceiling, carved from driftwood. The island also has a **Marine Aquarium** which displays a variety of tropical fish and corals.



Huts at Bangaram Island Resort

Agatti Island

55 km (34 miles) NW of Kavaratti.

✈️ 🇮🇳 to Indian passport holders only 🏠

Lakshadweep's only airport is on Agatti Island. It has a fine lagoon and offers easy access for day visits to the uninhabited islands of Bangaram, Tintakara and Paraiyan. Although all visitors arriving by plane must go through Agatti, the island itself is not open to foreign visitors.

Bangaram Island

58 km (36 miles) NW of Kavaratti.

✈️ 🇮🇳

The uninhabited Bangaram Island is covered with dense groves of coconut palms and has lovely sandy beaches.

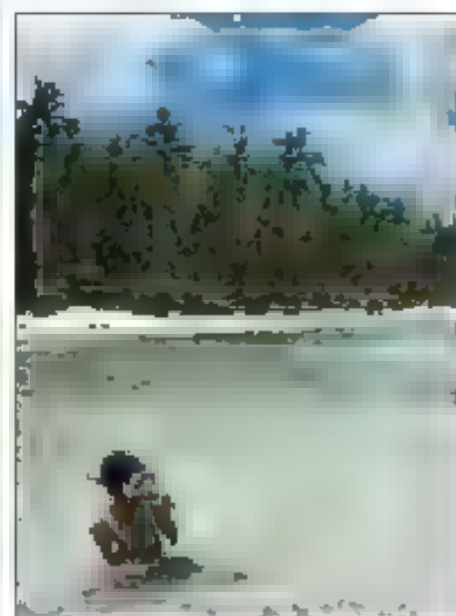
The **Bangaram Island Resort** (see p 715), run by Casino Hotels of Kochi, has about 30 rooms as well as a restaurant and bar. Its lagoon, rich with corals and tropical fish, is excellent for scuba diving and snorkeling. Visitors can also choose from the variety of water sports available,

including sailing. A health certificate from a doctor is required for diving.

Kadmat Island

70 km (44 miles) N of Kavaratti Island. ✈️ 🇮🇳

Thickly covered with palm trees, Kadmat Island has two fine lagoons to the east and west. The **Water Sports Institute** offers canoeing,



Snorkeling in Lakshadweep Islands' crystal-clear waters





Fisherfolk picking mussels among reefs in the shallows

kayaking and glass-bottomed boat rides, and the **Lacadives Dive School**, on the same premises, offers snorkelling and scuba diving and has qualified instructors.

Water Sports Institute
SPORTS Office, Kochi
Tel (0484, 266 8387

Lacadives Dive School
Tel Mumbai, (022) 5662 7381
Kochi, (0484, 236 7752
www.lacadives.com

Kalpeni Island

125 km (78 miles) SE of Kavaratt Island to Indian passport holders only

The clear shallow lagoon of Kalpeni Island is the largest in Lakshadweep. With excellent reefs, Kalpeni is ideal for diving and

snorkelling. Coral debris, deposited by a storm in 1847, has formed raised banks on the eastern and southern shores. Kalpeni's inhabitants were among the earliest islanders to send girls to school, paving the way for other islanders who had traditionally kept their girls and women confined to the home.

Minicoy Island

250 km (155 miles) S of Kavaratt Island to Indian passport holders only Lakshadweep's southernmost island. Minicoy has a unique culture, influenced by the neighbouring Maldives. Mal spoken here is a dialect of the Maldivian Divehi, which is



A hermit crab coming out of a shell

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Union Territory of Lakshadweep
200–450 km (124–280 miles) W of Kochi 10, 150 (Kavaratti).
 from Kochi to Agatti. from Kochi (30 hours). Boats are available for trips between the islands. A trip to Lakshadweep is only possible as part of a package tour; individual bookings are not permitted. For bookings contact Lakshadweep Tourism's Society for Nature Tourism & Sports (SPORTS) office in Kochi. (0484, 266 8387. For enquiries contact the Delhi office (011) 2338 6807. **Travel permits** These are mandatory and take at least two months to procure (see p 758); contact the Kochi SPORTS office. Many agencies run tours between October and March.

related to the Indo-Persian languages with a script written from right to left. Minicoy is often referred to as "Women's Island", as its ten villages are matrilineal. It is also rich in the performing arts; the traditional Lava dance is performed on festive occasions. Tuna fishing has become an important activity with the establishment of a tuna canning factory.

Minicoy has a grand lagoon, and is the only island in the archipelago with a stretch of mangroves along its shores. A large lighthouse built by the British in 1885, commands an impressive view of the sea.

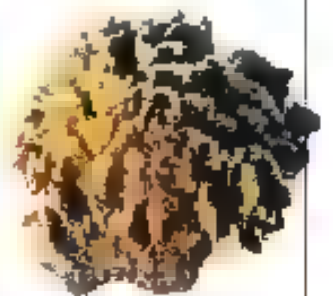
MARINE LIFE IN THE CORAL REEFS

The Lakshadweep Islands are a conglomeration of atolls – ring-shaped coral reef formations that are the richest coral reefs found in India. Formed over thousands of years, they are made up of billions of minute organisms called polyps. Related to sea anemones, polyps build their skeletons outside their body. As they grow, their limestone skeletons become elaborate coral formations, with new colonies spreading over dead ones, and eventually turn into formidable reefs. The complex and fragile reef ecosystem is alive with an extraordinary range of plants and marine life. Over 600 species of reef fish, such as clown fish and parrot fish, in a dazzling array of colours, giant crabs with purple spots, delicate sea fans and sea anemones, ink blue starfish, dolphins, harmless sharks and marine turtles, make up the spectacular diversity of the underwater world. (For tips on eco-friendly diving, see p 612)



Parali Island, one of Lakshadweep's many atolls

Corals of a 100-odd varieties, including the boulder-like porites, the ridged brain (right), and the branched staghorn can be seen here. The myriad colours are produced by the variety of algae that grow on them.





The nine-tiered tower dedicated to Shankaracharya, Kaladi

Kaladi ⑩

Ernakulam district, 35 km (22 miles) NE of Kochi. ☎

This quiet town on the banks of the beautiful Periyar river is celebrated as the birthplace of the great philosopher Shankaracharya. Two shrines, built in 1910 on the river bank, honour his memory. One is dedicated to him and the other to the goddess Sharada, and both are maintained by the Sringeri Matha (see p527).

Nearby is a spot known as Brindavan, where the Shankaracharya's mother, Aryamba, was cremated. The old Sri Krishna Temple near the Sharada Temple, has an image of the deity, said to have been installed by Shankaracharya himself. On the road to the Krishna Temple is a 46-m (151-ft) tall nine-tiered octagonal tower, the Sri Adi Shankaracharya Kirti Stambha Mangappa. Each of its floors commemorates the life and works of Shankaracharya.

Environs

The **Malayattor Church**, 8 km (5 miles) east of Kaladi, is said to be where St Thomas erected a cross. The 1,000-year-old rock-cut **Kalil Temple**, 22 km (14 miles) southeast of Kaladi, was originally a Jain temple. It is now dedicated to the mother goddess, Unake. At other temples, a female elephant is used in all ceremonial rituals.

Munnar ⑪

Idukki district, 130 km (81 miles) N of Kochi. ☎ **Tourist Information Centre, Munnar, (04865) 23 1516**
☎ daily.

The picturesque little town of Munnar lies at a height of about 1,800 m (5,906 ft), in a part of the Western Ghats known as the High Ranges. The name Munnar (which means "Three Rivers" in Tamil) is derived from its location at the confluence of three mountain streams – Kundala, Mudrapuzha and Nallathanni.

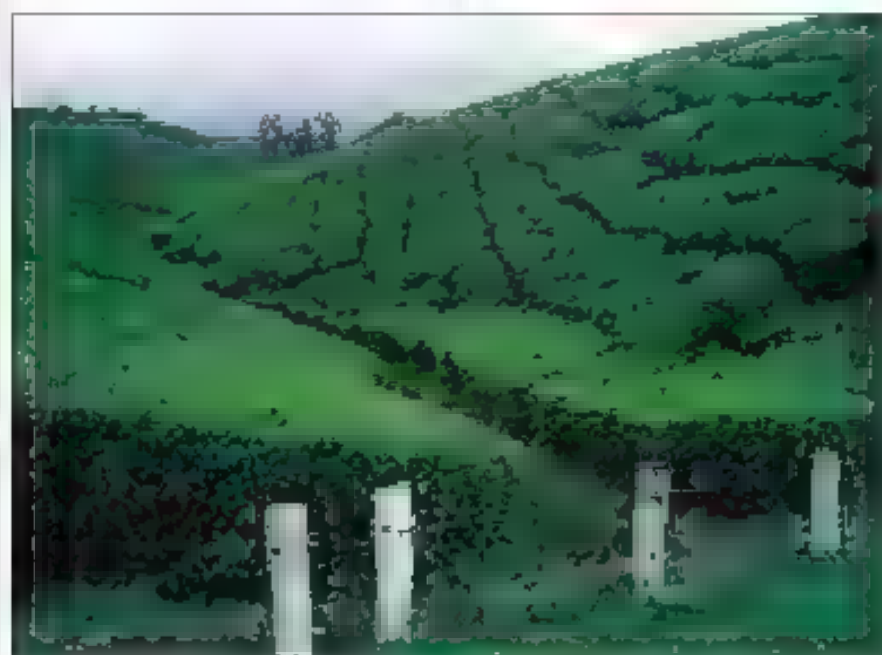
Located in 24,000 ha (59,305 acres) of sprawling tea estates, first established by the British in 1878, Munnar was once a summer resort for the British government in South India. The most important plantation in the High Ranges today belongs to Tata Tea, which oversees almost every public

facility in the vicinity. The quaint High Range Club, made of wicker and teak, still serves as a social centre for Munnar's planters and, with its customary "gentlemen's bar", retains an old-world atmosphere.

Munnar remains a popular destination for visitors from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Because of this, the town and its environs have witnessed a proliferation of hotels, restaurants and shopping centres. However, areas further away from the city centre remain relatively unspoilt, and the gentle hills offer excellent cycle rides and walks.

Environs

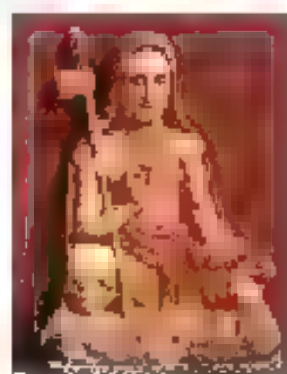
Mattupetty Lake, 13 km (8 miles) north of Munnar, is surrounded by lovely semi-alpine scenery. A specialized cattle-breeding centre is located nearby.



A view of the tea plantations around Munnar

ADI SHANKARACHARYA (AD 788–820)

Adi Shankaracharya, only 32 when he died, travelled the length and breadth of India, wrote erudite commentaries on Hindu scriptures, and composed devotional poems and prayers. The core of his monist philosophy is that there is only one reality and that is Brahman, the all-pervading cosmic force of which the human soul is a part, while all material objects are mere illusions (*maya*). The Buddhist elements in his philosophy provoked, during his lifetime, the orthodox Brahminical charge that he was a "Buddha in disguise". His historical importance lies in the fact that he provided an intellectual basis to Hinduism.



The philosopher Adi Shankaracharya



The captivating landscape of Eravikulam National Park

Eravikulam National Park 14

Idukki district 16 km (10 miles) NE of Munnar or auto-rickshaw from Munnar to Rajamalai, the entry point For information contact Divisional Forest Officer, Munnar, (04865) 23 1587 Aug-May

The rolling high-altitude grasslands, a striking contrast to the dense *sholas* or tropical montane forests of the valleys, are unique to the mountain landscape of the Western Ghats. Easily the best preserved stretch of this extraordinarily beautiful landscape is the Eravikulam National Park, spread across an area of 97 sq km (38 sq miles) at the base of the Anaimudi Mountain.

With a height of 2,695 m (8,842 ft), this has the distinction of being the highest peak south of the Himalayas. Anaimudi, which means "Elephant Head", not surprisingly resembles one. The peak and its environs provide good hiking territory.

The park, on the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, was established in 1978 with the specific aim of conserving the endangered Nilgiri tahr, a rare breed of mountain goat (see p19). Today the park is home to about 3,000 tahr, the single largest population of this slate-grey goat in the world. Extremely agile, it inhabits the rocky slopes, and can be observed at surprisingly close quarters. The park is also home to macaques, leopards,

and packs of *dhole*, the rare Indian wild dog. Its streams contain trout, and there are also more than 90 species of birds, including song birds such as the laughing thrush.

Eravikulam is regarded as one of the best managed national parks in the country. The Muduvan tribals, who live at the periphery of the park, are employed to assist in its conservation. Their traditional method of selectively burning parts of the grassland prevents large forest fires, and also helps regenerate the tender grass on which young tahr feed. Eravikulam is also famous for the *kurunji* (*Strobilanthes kunthianus*), the blue flowers that suddenly bloom en masse every 12 years and transform the rocky landscape into a sea of blue. The *kurunji* is next expected to bloom here in 2006.



Kurunji flower in full bloom

Kodungallur 15

Thrissur district 32 km (20 miles) N of Kochi Id (Feb/Mar), Bharani Festival (Mar/Apr)

Known as Muziris to the Greeks, and Cranganore to the Europeans, Kodungallur was the historic capital of the Cherman Perumals, monarchs of the Chera empire (see p43). Situated at the mouth of the Periyar river, this was the Malabar Coast's main port until a flood tide in 1341 silted up the harbour. After this catastrophe, Kochi (see p642) became the main port.

The town is today a major destination for Hindus, Christians and Muslims alike. The **Bhagavati Temple**, in the city centre, is the venue of a three-day festival of erotic song and dance. This temple was originally the shrine of a Dravidian goddess. It was then taken over by either the Buddhists or the Jains. The festival marks the reclaiming of the site for the goddess.

St Thomas (see p573) is said to have landed here in AD 52. The **Mar Thoma Pontifical Shrine** houses a sacred relic that was brought from the Vatican in 1953 to celebrate the anniversary of the saint's arrival 1,900 years earlier.

The **Cheraman Mosque**, 2 km (1.3 miles) from the city centre, was built in AD 629 by Malik Bin Dinar, who introduced Islam to Kerala. Perhaps the first mosque in India, it resembles a Hindu temple.

KERALA'S MATRILINEAL FAMILY SYSTEM

Called *marumakkathayam* in Kerala, the matrilineal family system, whereby inheritance is determined through the female line, is believed to have evolved in the late 10th century. This was a period of internecine warfare, and by placing women at the core of the inheritance, men could go to battle, knowing that their children's material well-being was protected. Children thus bear their mother's family name, and are identified as members of her family, with her brothers performing the role of the father figure. The Nairs are best known for this system, since warriors traditionally came from this community. Anthropologists, however, have traced its origin to the cult of the mother goddess, widely prevalent in Kerala.



A Nair matriarch from Kerala

The Asian Elephant

Literature, art and culture in India celebrate the elephant Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati, is the Remover of Obstacles, and his name is invoked before any important task is undertaken (see p467). Unlike in the rest of India, Ganesha is a minor deity in Kerala. Yet, elephants play a major role in the daily life and festivals of the people



Ganesha, the elephant god

of Kerala, who have a uniquely close and affectionate relationship with elephants. Though mainly used as draught animals, elephants also participate in temple rituals where they carry the deity in sacred processions. For such occasions elephants are splendidly caparisoned with ornaments of gold. The weather temples have their own elephants



ASIAN ELEPHANT

Denizen of the forests and floodplains of the Himalayan foothills, Central India and the southern highlands, the Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is not as tall as the African elephant, and has smaller ears.



Temple elephants are usually brought at the Sonepur Fair in Bihar (see p216). The mahout dresses his elephant every day, grooming and training him for temple festivals. All commands are given in Malayalam.

The tusker (a male with large tusks) faces great danger from poaching despite the ban on ivory.

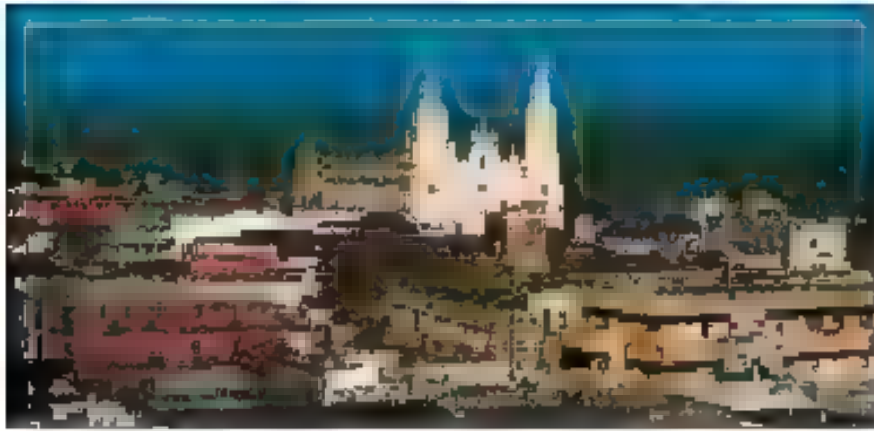


This 19th-century print shows how trained elephants were used to capture wild ones by driving them into *kheedas* (corrals).

In Kerala, elephants are often seen carrying their own feed. Most people admire mahouts to cut as many fronds of palm as the animal needs – up to 200 kg (441 lb) a day.



Icons and motifs depicting the elephant are common in Indian art, as they are an integral part of Hindu mythology and pageantry.



View of the Catholic Lourdes Cathedral in Thrissur

Thrissur 16

Thrissur district 80 km (50 miles) N of Kochi. ☎ 317 500 📠 🚗 🚏
Tourist Office, Govt Guest House,
(0487) 232 0800 🚗 Thrissur Pooram
(April/May), Kamdassamkadam Boat
Races (Aug/Sep)

This town, built around an elevated area called The Round, was planned during the reign of Raja Rama Varma, the ruler of Cochin (Kochi) in the 18th century. In the heart of The Round is the multi-roofed **Vadakkunnathan Temple**. This great Shiva temple was built in the 9th century, and has superb wood-carvings and rich decorative murals. The splendid Pooram festival is held here each year with the main activities taking

place outside the temple walls (non-Hindus are not permitted inside the shrine).

Northeast of the temple is the State Museum, displaying a good collection of murals, wood-carvings, sculpture and antique ornaments. The Archaeological Museum nearby is currently undergoing renovation.

Thrissur is often dubbed Kerala's cultural capital, as the town is home to two prestigious state-run cultural institutions. These are the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy (for music and theatre) and the Kerala Sahitya Academy (for literature).

The town suffered political upheavals for centuries, having

been successively ruled by the Zamorins of Kozhikode (see p653), Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the rulers of Kochi. The Dutch and the British have also made their presence felt in the history of this district, as is evident from the many impressive churches, such as the late 19th-century **Lourdes Cathedral** around the town.

Environs

Guruvayur, 29 km (18 miles) north of Thrissur, has Kerala's most popular temple. Legend has it that the 16th-century Shri Krishna Temple was created by Guru ("Instructor

of the Gods") and Vayu ("God of the Winds"). The temple's elephant sanctuary is within the compound of an old palace nearby. It houses more than 40 elephants that

belong to the deity – it is customary to present an elephant as an offering here.

The renowned performing arts and teaching centre, the **Kerala Kala Mandalam**, is 32 km (20 miles) northeast of Thrissur. Founded in 1930 by the famous Malayali poet Valathol Narayan Menon at Cherthuruthy, it offers intensive training in Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Koodiyattam dance forms. Instrumental and vocal music forms are taught here as well. The complex also has a large *natyagriha* (dance hall) for performances.

🏠 Kerala Kala Mandalam

Tel (04884) 26 2305 for permission

☐ Mon–Fri 🕒 public hrs, April/May



Entrance, Shri Krishna Temple



Vadakkunnathan Temple in Thrissur

THE POORAM FESTIVAL

A *pooram* (meeting) is a temple festival marked by the ceremonious congregation, at a particular temple, of deities from various other temples. Though a number of *poorams* are held throughout Kerala, Thrissur's Pooram is the most spectacular. Held between April and May, it celebrates the processional arrival of two goddesses before Shiva, after whom the town is named. Through a sea of devotees and the hypnotic beat of percussion instruments, two rows of elephants, with the central ones carrying the deities, move majestically towards each other. A firework display ends the celebrations.



Elephants at the Pooram festival

Palakkad 17

Palakkad district, 99 km (62 miles) N of Kochi 130,750 Tourist Information Centre, near Children's Park. (0491) 253 8996 Chariot Festival (Oct/Nov)

Situated at the base of the Western Ghats, Palakkad (Pa ghat) derives its name from the dense forests (*kadu*) of *pala* (*Alsteria scholaris*) trees that once covered the land. Today, however, paddy fields and tobacco plantations have taken their place.

Tipu's Fort, in the heart of the town, was built by Haider Ali of Mysore in 1766; it was subsequently occupied by the British after they defeated his son and successor, Tipu Sultan (see p517), some 30 years later. This sombre, granite structure now houses various government offices.

The large **Vishwanatha Temple**, on the banks of the Kalpathy river, is famous for its chariot procession.

On the outskirts of town are the extensive **Malampuzha Gardens**, laid out above a huge irrigation dam built across the Malampuzha river. Pleasant boat cruises are possible on a large lake, nesting in the foothills.

Environs

The town of **Kollengode** is 19 km (12 miles) south of Palakkad and is set in pastoral surroundings. The Vishnu Temple and Kollengode Palace are worth a visit. **Thiruthala**, 75 km (47 miles) west of Palakkad, has a Shiva temple and the ruins of a mud fort. Its most important sight, the Kattimadam Temple, is a granite Buddhist monument dating from the 9th–10th centuries.



The desolate ruins of Tipu's Fort at Palakkad



Silent Valley, a haven of rare plants and herbs

Silent Valley National Park 18

Palakkad district, 88 km (55 miles) NW of Kochi Mannarkkad, the entry point. Jeeps available to Mukkali. For permits contact the Wildlife Warden, Mannarkkad, (04924) 25 3225

The Silent Valley National Park, spread over an area of 90 sq km (35 sq miles), preserves what is perhaps the country's last substantial stretch of virgin tropical evergreen forest. An

important part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (see p520), it represents some of the spectacular biodiversity of the Western Ghats. The park is renowned for its rare plants and herbs, which include

over 100 species of orchids. Wildlife includes tigers, elephants, the Nilgiri langur, the sloth bear, the shy nocturnal slender loris, and the endangered lion-tailed macaque. A variety of birds, as well as a remarkable 100 species of butter-

flies and 400 species of moths, are also found here. Visitors can trek to the source of the Kunthipuzha river which flows through this valley. Accommodation is available at the forest lodge in Mukkali just outside the park.

Malappuram 19

Malappuram district, 153 km (95 miles) N of Kochi 10483 2733 1504 daily Valiya Nercha (Feb/Mar), Shivaratri (Feb/Mar)

This "land atop hills" stands at the entrance to the Malabar region, and is crossed by three major rivers – the Chaliyar, the Kadalundi, and the Bharatapuzha. A military centre of the Zamorins of Calicut, it was the scene of fierce fighting between British forces and the Moplahs (Muslim peasants known as the Moplah Revolt). The most serious uprising occurred in 1921, after which many rebels were exiled to the Andamans (see pp618–19). The old British barracks, on a hilltop overlooking the Kadalundi river, now houses the district administration. Malappuram is also an important seat of both Hindu and Islamic learning.

Environs

Kerala's pioneering Ayurvedic institution (see p629) is at **Kottakkal**, 12 km (7 miles) southwest of Malappuram. Started in 1902, the Kottakkal Arya Vaidyasala is based in a splendid building, and has a



Arya Vaidyasala, at Kottakkal

research centre and hospital. **Tirur** 32 km (20 miles) south-west of Malappuram, was the 16th-century birthplace of the father of Malayalam literature, Tunchat Ramanuja Ezhuthachan. He also taught the Malayalam alphabet to children, a practice that continues at a shrine dedicated to him.

One of the earliest Portuguese settlements on the Malabar Coast was at **Tanur**, 34 km (21 miles) southwest of Malappuram. St Francis Xavier (see p496) is said to have come here in 1546.

Kozhikode 20

Kozhikode district 254 km (158 miles) N of Kochi. 436,600. Karipur, 25 km (16 miles) S of city centre. District Tourism Promotion Council, (0495) 273 4355. Shivratri Jtsavam (Feb/Mar).

This busy commercial town, better known throughout the world as Calicut, was the capital of the kingdom of the powerful Zamorins (a Portuguese corruption of their title, Samoothiri). Under them the town prospered as a major centre of the Malabar trade in spices and textiles, and it was from Calicut that the word calico originated as the term for white unbleached cotton

It was in Calicut, too, that Vasco da Gama, the intrepid Portuguese explorer who discovered the sea route to India, was first received by the Zamorin in his palace in May 1498.

Dominating the city centre is the large Manamchira Tank, flanked by the Town Hall and the Public Library, both fine examples of traditional architecture. A striking Roman Catholic cathedral also stands near the Manamchira Tank.

The town's Muslim heritage is indicated by its numerous mosques, remarkable for their massive size and elaborate wood carvings. Among these the Mishqal Palli, near the port, is the most impressive, with a five-tiered tiled roof.

The **Pazhassirajah Museum** exhibits wood and metal sculptures, models of temples and reconstructions of megalithic monuments. The Art Gallery next door has paintings by Raja Ravi Varma, the 19th-century painter who belonged to a princely family from Travancore (see p626). Kozhikode's busy shopping area, the quaintly-named **Sweetmeats Street**, was once lined with shops selling the famous Calicut *batuta*, a brightly coloured sweet made of flour and sugar. Today, SM Street, as it is popularly known, has only a few shops that sell *batuta*. Court Road, leading off SM Street, houses the bustling Spice Market. Kozhikode is today the storage and trading centre for hill produce from Wynad (see p654); spices such as cloves,

cardamom, pepper, turmeric, and coffee are sorted and packaged in the old warehouses along the waterfront.

Pazhassirajah Museum

East Hill (0495) 238 1253

Tue-Sun

Environs

A short 16-km (10-mile) drive north of the city leads to the small village of **Kappad**, where a stone plaque on the beach commemorates the spot where Vasco da Gama is supposed to have landed in 1498.

The historic village of **Beypore**, 10 km (6 miles) south of Kozhikode, is believed to be the fabled Ophir, referred to in ancient Greek and Roman texts. Artisans still follow the traditional methods of their forefathers at this ancient shipbuilding centre (see p633). The type of dhows that were built here for Arab merchants more than 1,500 years ago are still in demand in West Asia. Old vessels are also brought here to be repaired.

Thusharagiri, 50 km (31 miles) away from Kozhikode, is a plantation town that abounds in rubber, areca, and pepper, ginger and spices. It is also a trekking and rock climbing destination. The surrounding hills offer some exciting trails. One of the most popular is a 12-km (7.5-mile) long trek that crosses three lovely waterfalls, one of which falls from a height of 75 m (246 ft), and climbs up through dense evergreen forests where a variety of birds and animals can be spotted. The nearest airport is at Karipur, about 23 km (14 miles) from Kozhikode.



Fishermen with colorful nets in the harbor of Beypore.



The Tree House in Wynad, blending into the sylvan landscape

Wynad District 21

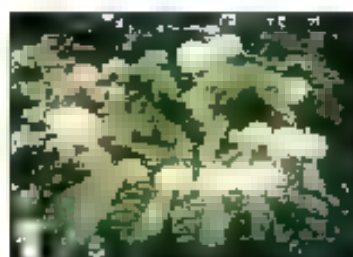
280 km (174 miles) NE from Kochi to Kalpetta Tourist Information centre, Kalpetta, (04936) 20 4441

A remote region of virgin rainforests and mist-clad mountain ranges, Wynad provides the ideal climatic conditions for Kerala's extensive plantations of cardamom, pepper, coffee and rubber. Relatively untouched by modernization, this is the homeland of large groups of indigenous tribal communities such as the cave-dwelling Cholanaiyans, and the down-trodden Paniyas, who until 50 years ago were sold as bonded labour to plantation owners. It is also the favoured habitat of animals such as the Nilgiri langur, wild elephants and the giant Malabar squirrel.

The gateway to Wynad is Lakkidi, at its southern end. An ancient tree on the main highway, ominously draped with a heavy iron chain, presents a curious sight. Local legend claims that it binds the angry spirit of a Paniya tribesman who showed a group of British surveyors the path through the dense forest. Instead of being rewarded, he

was killed here and his spirit apparently haunted the highway until it was exorcised.

Kalpetta, the district headquarters, is 15 km (9 miles) to the north. Once a major Jain centre (see p396) this has two Jain temples situated nearby. The Anantanathaswami Temple is at Puliyarmala, 6 km (4 miles) away, while the Glass Temple of Kootamunda, dedicated to the third Jain *tirthankara*, Parshvanatha, is on the slope of Vallarimal Hill, 20 km (12 miles) to the south. The area's tallest peak, Chemoora Peak



Coffee blossoms in a Wynad plantation

(2,100 m, 6,890 ft) is 14 km (9 miles) southwest of Kalpetta, and is excellent for trekking and birdwatching. **Sulthan's Battery** (Sultan's Battery), 10 km (6 miles) east of Kalpetta, derives its name from Tipu Sultan of Mysore (see p517) who built a fort here in the 18th century. The **Edakkal Caves** are 12 km (7 miles) away. Their inscriptions and carvings of human and animal figures are said to date to prehistoric times, some believe that these caves were the refuge of Jain monks. The caves' environs abound in megaliths. The **Wynad (Muthanga) Wildlife Sanctuary**, 16 km (10 miles) east of Sulthan's Battery, was established in 1973 and is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (see p520). **Mananthavady**, 35 km (22 miles) north of Kalpetta was the scene of a long guerrilla war between the local king, Pazhassi Raja, and British troops, led by Lord Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. About 32 km (20 miles) to the north is the Vishnu Temple at Thirunelli, built beside the Paapanassini river. This is a major pilgrimage site where Hindus perform funeral rites.

Edakkal Caves

daily

Wynad Sanctuary

extra charges. Permits from Wildlife Warden, Sulthan Battery. (04936, 22 0454)



The remains of Tipu's fort, Sulthan's Battery

Mahe 22

Union Territory of Pondicherry. Mahe district. 48 km (30 miles) N of Kozhikode. Govt Tourist Home, (0495) 270 2304. St Theresa's Feast (Oct).

Situated on the Mayyazhi river, this former French enclave is named after the French admiral, Mahe de La Bourdonnais, who landed here in November 1741. A French colony until 1954, it is today part of the Union Territory of Pondicherry (see p586). Only some traces of Mahe's colonial heritage remain, among them the beautiful old residence of the French administrator, at the mouth of the river. It is now the office-cum-residence of the Indian government's administrator. Mahe's main church, the whitewashed, Baroque St Theresa's Church, is situated on the highway. The town's main "industry" seems to centre around the supply of cheap alcohol, attracting truck drivers and motorists who come here from nearby areas to stock up.

Thalaserry 23

Kannur district. 255 km (158 miles) N of Kochi.

Fishing is a major occupation in Thalaserry (once known as Tellicherry), and observing the bartering of the day's catch can be an enjoyable experience. The British East India Company established



Fishmongers awaiting the daily catch at Thalaserry

one of their first trading posts at Thalaserry at the end of the 17th century. In 1708, they built the enormous laterite fort on the coast. An old lighthouse still stands on its ramparts, and there are also two secret tunnels, one of which leads into the sea.

The Thalaserry Cricket Club, founded in 1860, is one of the oldest in India, as cricket was introduced here in the late 18th century.

This region is one of the main centres of *kalaripayattu* (see p626), a fact that has made it a training ground for circus artistes as well. It is a common sight to see young men in the *kalar* (gymnasium), exercising to tone their muscles and practising with wooden weapons. Many images of deities adorn the *kalar*, giving it a sacred character.

Kannur 24

Kannur district. 66 km (41 miles) N of Kochi. District Tourism Promotion Council, Taluk Office Campus, (0497) 270 6336. daily.

This scenic coastal town, called Cannanore by European settlers, was an important maritime centre in the 14th

and 15th centuries. The Portuguese built **St Angelo Fort**, 5 km (3 miles) south of the city, in 1505. This enormous laterite structure overlooks the fishing harbour and is protected by the sea on three sides. It was later occupied by the British, who established a large military garrison here.



facade of the fort, Thalaserry

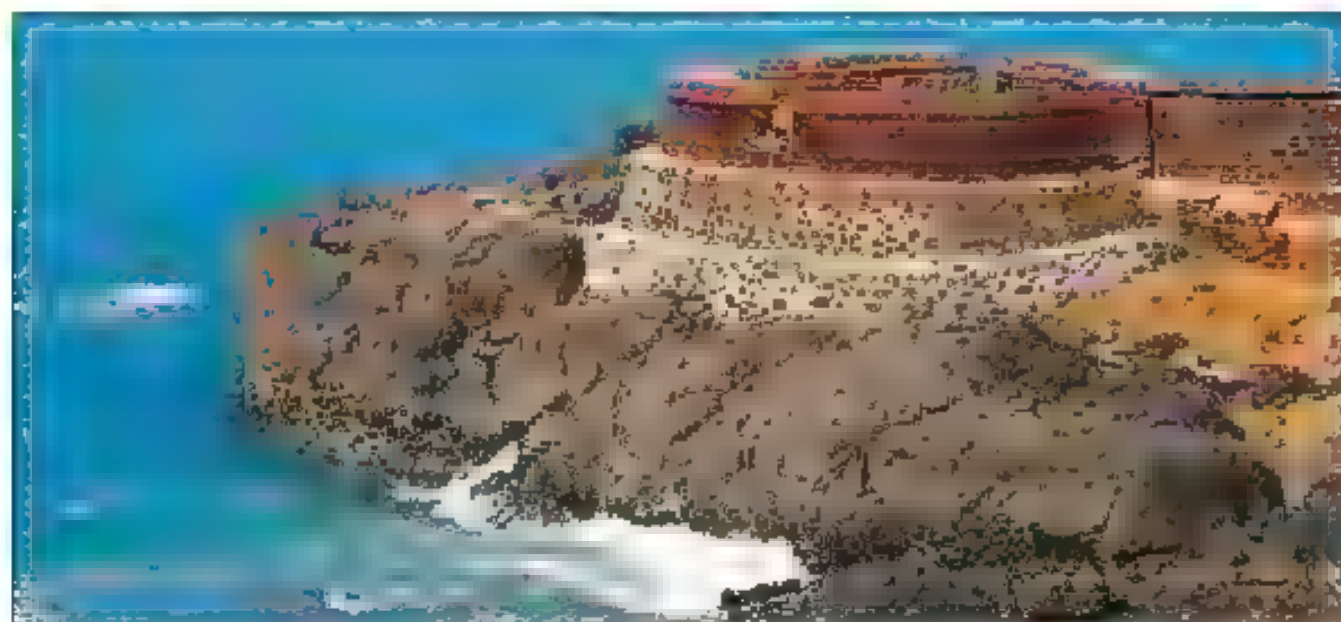
Muzhapilangad Beach, 15 km (9 miles) south of Kannur, is a serene spot with a 4-km (2.5-mile) long sandy beach, safe for swimmers.

THEYYAM, KERALA'S SPECTACULAR DANCE-RITUAL



A Theyyam dancer clad in a colourful costume

This dance-ritual, particular to the north Malabar region, was originally aimed at appeasing ancient village deities, the mother goddess, folk heroes, ancestors and spirits. With the advent of Brahminism, Hindu divinities replaced many of the earlier ones, and the Theyyam pantheon shrank from 300 to around 40. The Theyyam presentation begins with the singing of the *thottam* (song) in praise of the deity relevant to that particular ritual. This is followed by the dance, the steps and postures of which show the strong influence of Kerala's martial arts tradition, *kalaripayattu*. Drums, pipes and cymbals provide the accompaniment. The performers, all male, wear masks, body paint, colourful costumes and imposing headgear (*mudi*), which often rises to a staggering height of more than 2 m (7 ft). The tender leaves of the coconut palm are cut to various designs and shapes to form part of the elaborate costume of the dancer. Theyyams, usually annual rituals, are held between December and May. However, at the Parassinikadavu Temple, 20 km (12 miles) north of Kannur, Theyyam is performed every day.



The laterite ramparts of Bekal Fort, outside Kasaragod town

Kasaragod District 25

400 km (249 miles) S from Kochi to Kasaragod. Tourism Promotion Council (04994) 25 6450.

Kerala's northernmost district, flanked by the Western Ghats to the east and the Arabian Sea to the west, is a fertile region of thickly forested hills and meandering rivers. The district is named after its main town, Kasaragod, a bustling centre of the coir and handloom industries. About 8 km (5 miles) north of Kasaragod is the **Madhur Temple**. This beautiful temple, with its copper-plate roofing, has a commanding location overlooking the Madhavahim river.

Situated 16 km (10 miles) south of Kasaragod is **Bekal Fort**, the largest and best-preserved fort in Kerala. This enormous, circular structure is built with large blocks of laterite, and its outer wall rises majestically from the sea to a height of 39 m (128 feet). Inside is a cunningly concealed tunnel that leads directly to the sea. The fort's origins are shrouded in mystery, though it is generally thought to have been built in the mid-1600s by a local chieftain, Shivappa Nayak, whose fiefdom was in neighbouring Karnataka. The scene of much conflict, the

fort was eventually occupied by the British after the defeat of Tipu Sultan (see p517).

Many beautiful beaches lie to the north and south of the fort. The closest **Pallikere Beach**

provides a spectacular view of the fort. The Kerala government, along with the Bekal Resorts Development Corporation, have plans to develop this area as a major tourist complex. About 6 km (4 miles) north of Bekal,

Kappil Beach is a secluded area, ideal for swimming. Kodu Cliff, at one end of the beach, is a scenic spot with wonderful views of the sunset on the Arabian Sea.

The **Chandragiri Fort**, on the banks of the Chandragiri river, is 10 km (6 miles) north of Bekal. This 17th-century fort is also attributed to Shivappa Nayak, who built it to defend his kingdom against the Vijayanagar rulers (see pp530–31). The imposing Malik Dinar Mosque, nearby, is said to have been

founded by Malik Ibn Dinar, a disciple of the Prophet Muhammad, who introduced Islam to Kerala in about AD 664. The grave of Malik Ibn

Muhammed, a

descendant of Malik Ibn Dinar, lies here.

The 9th-century **Ananthapura Temple**, 30 km (19

miles) north of Bekal, is the only temple in

Kerala erected in the centre of a lake. It is

said to be the original abode of Ananthapadmanabha, the presiding deity of the Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, the state capital (see p627).

The small hill station of **Ranipuram** is situated 85 km (53 miles) east of Kasaragod. Set amid acres of rubber and spice plantations, it offers good opportunities for trekking.

This region is also the centre for a number of performing arts, such as Theyyam (see p655), and Yakshagana, the elaborate folk art form from Karnataka (see p235).



A typical temple lamp



Ananthapura Temple, built in the middle of a lake

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp714–17 and pp742–3

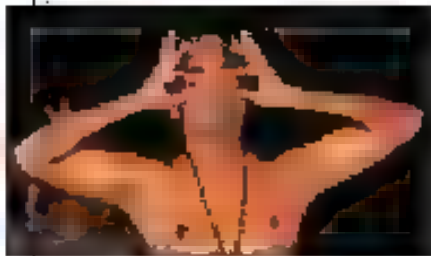
Kathakali: Kerala's Classical Dance-Drama

Literally meaning "story play" Kathakali is a highly evolved classical form of dance, drama and music (both vocal and instrumental), that is almost 400 years old. Male actor-dancers, in voluminous colourful skirts, elaborate headdresses and jewellery, enact stories from the Puranas and epics, mainly the *Mahabharata* (see p. 26). The story unfolds simply at first, before building



A noble *paccha* character

to a dramatic climax. The frenetic drumming, the emotive singing and the rhythmic movements of the dancers reach a crescendo, as the many scenes of love and valour culminate in the triumph of good over evil. These are traditionally all night performances, held in temple courtyards during religious festivals. Modern performances are shorter.



Facial movements are used to convey emotions, and to conduct dialogues

Make-up, a complex four-hour process helps identify characters and define their roles. Mineral pigments and lamp black are the main ingredients. A paper frill defines the jaw line.



Bejewelled crowns are worn by *kathi* characters



Paccha character

Tadi characters wear red, white or black headdresses

Mythical bird

Fingernails are long and painted silver

The female character (*minukku*)

Voluminous skirts

KATHAKALI CHARACTERS

Costumes and facial make-up use symbolic colours. Green (*paccha*) signifies divine and heroic characters, such as Krishna and Arjuna, while royal though arrogant personalities, such as Ravana, are distinguished by the red (*kathi*) patch applied over the bridge of the nose on a green background. Black (*kari*) is used for demons.



Actor-dancers, all male, do not speak but instead use symbolic mudras (hand gestures) and facial expressions, with immense eloquence.



Percussion is provided by two drums, chenda and madalam. The lead singer marks the beat with a chengila (gong), and his assistant plays the cymbals.



ANDHRA PRADESH

From the unspoilt beaches of Visakhapatnam along the Coromandel Coast, to the emerald green paddy fields of Nellore district, much of Andhra Pradesh is occupied by the rocky Deccan Plateau which rises 1 000 m (3 281 ft) above the fertile coastal plains. This is South India's largest state covering an area of 275,000 sq km (106,178 sq miles). The main language spoken by its 78 million people is Telugu, though Urdu is also spoken in the state capital, Hyderabad. This

vibrant city was until 1947, the seat of the fabulously wealthy royal family, the Asaf Jahi Nizams. Andhra Pradesh's varied cultural heritage is visible in its monuments. These include the ancient Buddhist site at Nagarjunakonda, the great Islamic fort of Golconda and the hilltop Hindu temple at Tirupati which attracts more pilgrims than any other temple in India. The state's distinctive handicrafts include superb woven ikat textiles, pearl jewellery and inlaid metal *bidri* work.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns, Cities & Districts

East Godavari District ⑪
Hyderabad ①
Kondapalli ①
Machilipatnam ⑪
Pochampalli ①
Srikakulam District ⑨
Vijayawada ⑪
Visakhapatnam ③
Warangal ②

Historic Sites

Amravati ⑭
Chandragiri ⑭
Golconda ②
Nagarjunakonda ⑩
Penakonda ⑭
Ramathirtham ⑧

Temples & Holy Places

Alampur ⑫
Lepakshi ⑫
Palampet ③
Puttaparthi ⑪
Sri Kalahasti ⑫
Srisaam & Krishna Gorge ⑩
Tirupati ⑬

Areas of Natural Beauty

Borra Caves ⑦



Hyderabad ❶



Enamel tiles, Badshahi Ashurkhana

The sixth largest city in India, Hyderabad was founded in 1591 and planned as a grid with the Charminar (see pp662–3) at its centre. It has now grown well beyond the confines of the original walled city, to include a new town north of the Musi river, the military cantonment at Secunderabad, and a burgeoning high-tech estate, nicknamed "Cyberabad". The city's sights include the grand palaces of its erstwhile rulers, the Nizams, and the colourful bazaars and mosques of the old city.



The Neo-Classical façade of the 19th-century Purani Haveli

❶ Purani Haveli (Nizam's Museum)

Near Mir Alam Mandi Rd. **Tel** (040) 2452 1029 ☐ Sat–Thu ☐ public hols

This sprawling complex of mid-19th-century Neo-Classical buildings was the main residence of the sixth Nizam, Mahbub Ali Pasha. A glimpse of his lavish lifestyle can be seen in the eastern wing of the main building, in the Massarat Mahal. This has the Nizam's gigantic wooden wardrobe – a 3-sq-m (80-sq-ft) room with closets on two levels, and a mechanical elevator affording access to the upper tier. Its contents once included 75 identical tweed suits – the Nizam liked the pattern so much that he bought the Scottish factory's entire stock of it.

Purani Haveli also houses the Nizam's Museum, which displays china, silver objects, art, and several fascinating photographs that capture the legendary opulence of the Nizam and his court.

❷ Salarjung Museum

Near Naya Pul. **Tel** (040) 2452 3211

☐ Sat–Thu ☐ public hols ☐ ☐

This eclectic collection of over 40,000 objects once belonged to Salarjung III, Prime Minister of Hyderabad between 1899 and 1949. Salarjung's highly individual taste ranged from objects of sublime beauty to some bordering on kitsch, which is what makes this museum so fascinating.

The pride of the museum is the outstanding Mughal jade collection, which includes an exquisite translucent leaf-shaped cup. Miniature paintings are also well-represented, including those of the local Deccani School (see p543), as are Indian stone and bronze sculpture, maid-vary objects and medieval Islamic manuscripts. A prized 15th-century Koran



Portraits of Salarjung III and his son, painted on ivory

has the signatures of three Mughal emperors.

Salarjung's rather florid taste in European art is represented by some 19th-century statuary, while his collection of oil paintings includes a canvas of a Guard and a Lanaseer.

❸ Osmania General Hospital

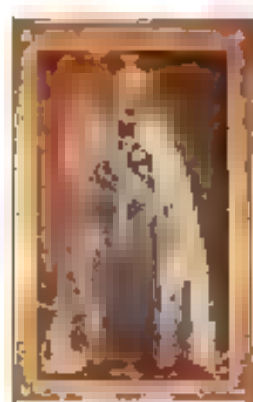
Afzalgarh. **Tel** (040) 2460 0121

☐ daily

A spectacular stone building with soaring domes, Osmania General Hospital was built in 1925 as part of the seventh Nizam's modernization plan, after a catastrophic flood in 1908. Opposite it, across the river, are the **Boys' High School** and the **High Court**, built in pink granite and red sandstone. An imaginative blend of Islamic decorative detail and Western interior layout, all three buildings, as

THE NIZAMS OF HYDERABAD

Hyderabad was India's biggest and richest princely state, as large as England and Scotland together. Its rulers, known as the Nizams, belonged to the Asaf Jahi dynasty, founded in 1724 by Nizam-ul-Mulk, who first came to Hyderabad as the Mughal governor of the Deccan, and then established his independence as Mughal power in Delhi waned. The Nizams' fabulous wealth derived largely from their leg-



Portrait of the last Nizam (c.1911–48)

endary hoard of emeralds and their diamond mines near Golconda, and many tales are told of their extravagance and eccentricities. The seventh and last Nizam, Osman Ali Khan, was the richest man in India but, unlike his ancestors, he was a notorious miser who smoked cigarette butts and wore the same set of shabby, patched clothes for weeks on end. After Independence in 1947, the Nizam resisted joining the Indian Union. However, riots broke out and Indian Army action to restore order finally led to the state's accession.

well as the city's Railway Station, were constructed between 1914 and 1936, and are the work of the British architect Vincent Esch.

Badshahi Ashurkhana

Parthergatt Rd. ☐ daily, with permission of the caretaker. This historic building, the Ashurkhana or "Royal House of Mourning" was built in 1595 by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the fifth Qutb Shahi ruler (see pp66-7), as a congregation hall for Shias during the month of Muharram. It houses beautiful silver and gold *alam*s (cer-

emonial standards) studded with precious stones, which are carried in procession during Muharram (see pp66-9), and are on display here through the year, on Thursdays.

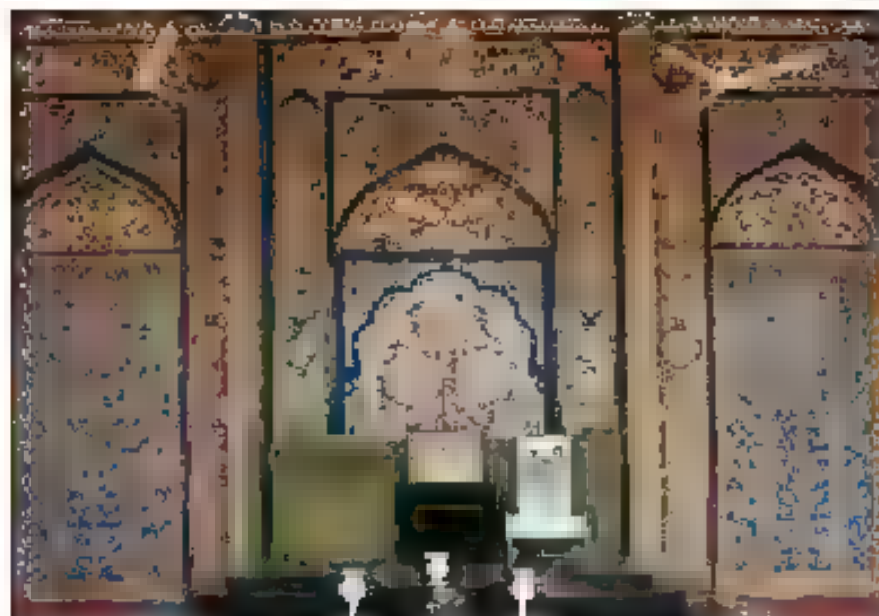
Exquisite enamel-tiled mosaics adorn the central niche and the western wall, in glowing yellow, orange and turquoise. The outer hall with wooden colonnades was added later.

Charminar

See pp66-3.

Mecca Masjid

See pp66-3.



Splendid 17th-century tiled mosaics in the Badshahi Ashurkhana

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Ranga Reddy district 688 km
428 miles N of Chennai 📍
3,449,900 📍 16 km (10 miles,
N of city centre, then bus or taxi.
📍 📍 📍 AP Tourism, (040)
2329 8456 📍 daily, 📍 Muhar-
ram (Mar-Apr), Mithqasira (Jun)

Falaknuma Palace

Near Naya Pul. 📍 Closed for renovation, check for opening dates. The most opulent of the Nizams' many palaces, Falaknuma Palace was built in 1872. The front façade is in Palladian style, while the rear is a jumble of Indo-Saracenic domes and cupolas, added on to house the zenana. A huge amount of money was lavished on the interior, with tooled leather ceilings created by Florentine craftsmen, furniture and tapestries ordered from France, and marble imported from Italy.

The Nizams' most important guests, including King George V, stayed at Falaknuma, but after the death of the sixth Nizam here in 1911 (after a heavy bout of drinking, it is rarely used again. The palace is now being converted into a luxurious hotel.

HYDERABAD CITY CENTRE

- Badshahi Ashurkhana ④
- Charminar ⑤
- Mecca Masjid ⑥
- Osmania General Hospital ③
- Purani Haveli (Nizam's Museum) ①
- Salarjung Museum ②



Key to Symbols see back flap

Hyderabad Street-by-Street: Charminar



Detail from arch,
Charminar

In the heart of the Old City, Charminar ("Four Towers") is Hyderabad's signature landmark. It was built in 1591 by King Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah of the Qutb Shahi dynasty (see p666) and, according to legend, marks the spot where he first saw his lover, the beautiful Hindu dancer Baagnmati. Another story says he built it as thanksgiving at the end of a deadly plague epidemic. Today,

Charminar is the hub of a busy commercial area, where the grand mosques and palaces of the erstwhile rulers are surrounded by lively bazaars selling everything from pearls and perfumes to cabbages and computers.



Caps on sale on the pavement
outside Mecca Masjid



★ Mecca Masjid

Built between 1617 and 1694, this huge mosque has bricks from Mecca embedded in its central arch. Several Nizams are buried here.

Unani Hospital

was built by the last Nizam in the 1920s for the practice of traditional Graeco-Arab medicine.

0 metres 50
0 yards 50

KEY

--- Suggested route

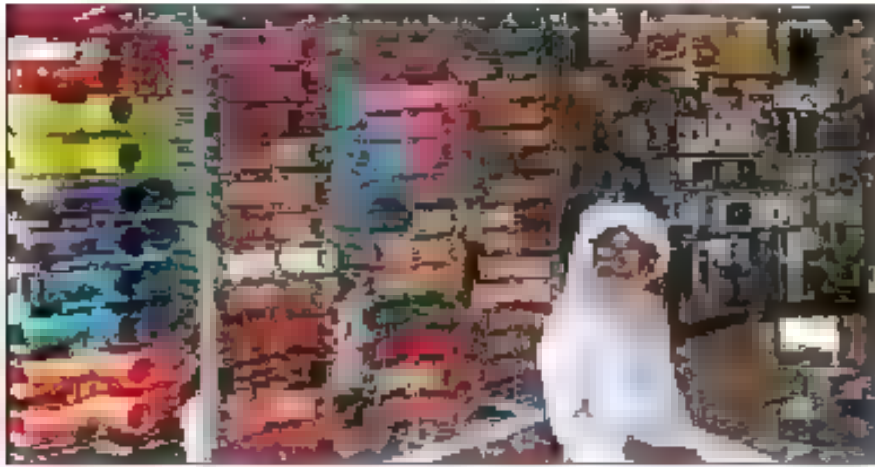
Silver-leaf is beaten into water-thin sheets in the shops in this street and used to decorate sweets.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Mecca Masjid
- ★ Charminar
- ★ Lad Bazaar

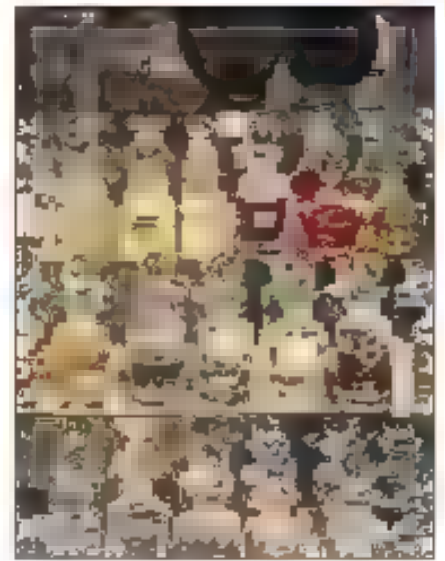
★ **Charminar**
Grand arches frame Charminar's four sides. On the top floor is the city's oldest mosque. The minarets soar to 54 m (177 ft).





★ Lad Bazaar

Bangles, tinsel, embroidery, brocade turbans for bridegrooms, henna, herbal potions, and everything else needed for a bride's trousseau, are sold in this colourful bazaar



Attar Shop

Perfume oils, sold in tiny bottles, include a local speciality called *gil* which captures the scent of wet earth after the first rainfall of a scorching summer

Charminar

Kamaan served as the entrance to the royal mosque inside Charminar. Nearby are shops selling pearls.

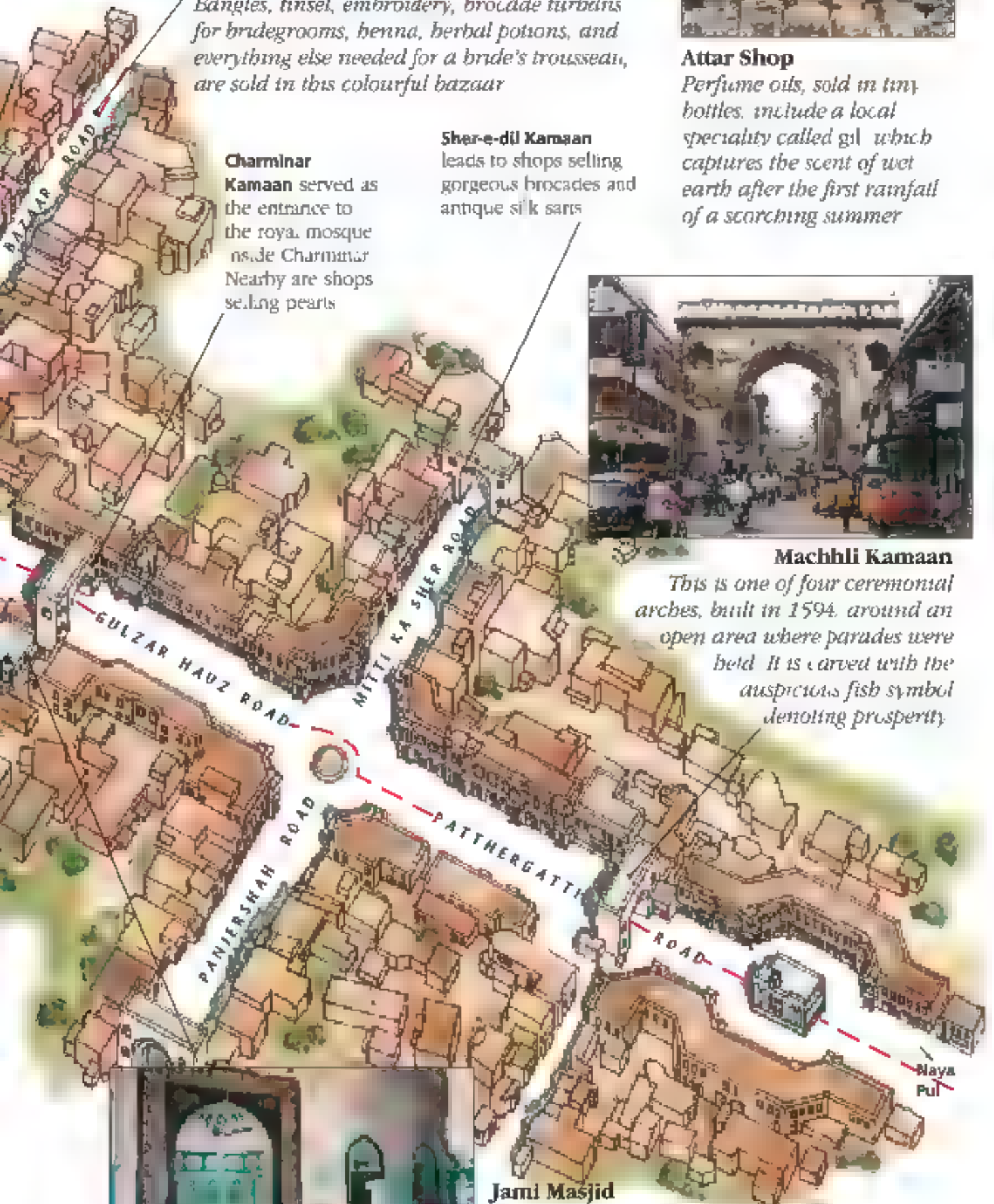
Sher-e-dil Kamaan

leads to shops selling gorgeous brocades and antique silk saris



Machhli Kamaan

This is one of four ceremonial arches, built in 1594, around an open area where parades were held. It is carved with the auspicious fish symbol denoting prosperity.



Jami Masjid

This simple whitewashed mosque, built in 1597, is the second oldest in Hyderabad

Exploring Hyderabad & Secunderabad

By the 19th century, Hyderabad had begun to expand beyond the crowded confines of the old quarter, clustered on both banks of the Musi river. New palaces, and the British military cantonment of Secunderabad, were now built on the city's outskirts.

▣ Birla Archaeological Museum

Opposite Ravindra Bharathi, Sarfabad

Tel (040) 2323 4336 ☐ Mon-Sat

☒ public hols. ☒

Located in the 19th-century hunting lodge of the sixth Nizam, Asmangarh Palace is the Birla Archaeological Museum. Its exhibits include sculptures and metal artifacts found at excavation sites in Andhra Pradesh, among them some beautiful bronzes of Shiva and Vishnu.

A short distance to the south is an obelisk which marks the Tomb of Michel Raymond. A French mercenary who fought in the Nizam's army from 1785 till his death in 1798, Raymond became a local hero, revered by both Muslims and Hindus.

▣ The Residency

Koti ☐ Mon-Sat

This elegant Palladian mansion, now the University College for Women, was built in 1805 by the third Nizam as a gift for the British Resident at his court, James Kirkpatrick. It was decorated in style, with a painted ceiling, and mirrors and chandeliers from Brighton Pavilion in England. The pediment above the portico still bears the East India Company's lion-and-unicorn coat of arms.

In the grounds is a small replica of the main building, which Kirkpatrick built for his aristocratic Hyderabad wife Khairunissa Begum – a liaison that created a great scandal at the time. There is a small British cemetery in a corner of the grounds.

▣ State Archaeological Museum

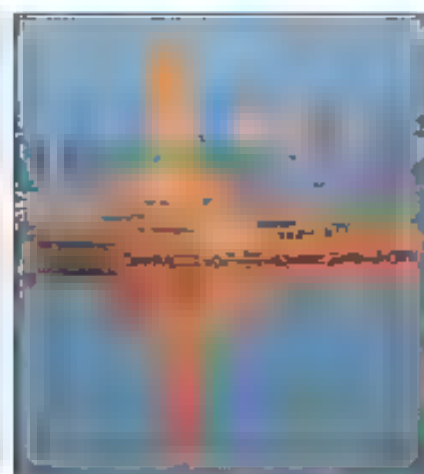
Assembly Rd, N of Railway Station

Tel (040) 2323 2267 ☐ Sat-Thu

☒ Fri & public hols. ☒

Two large Norman-style gateways mark the entrance to the Nampally Public Gardens which contain the State

Archaeological Museum. It has a large collection of Buddhist art, some fine Chola bronzes, Roman coins, and even an Egyptian mummy. There are also replicas of murals and sculptures from the Ajanta and Ellora caves (see pp476–81). Nearby is the **State Legislative Assembly** (built in 1913), a domed complex modelled on a Rajasthan palace.



Hussain Sagar, with a gigantic statue of the Buddha

▣ Hussain Sagar

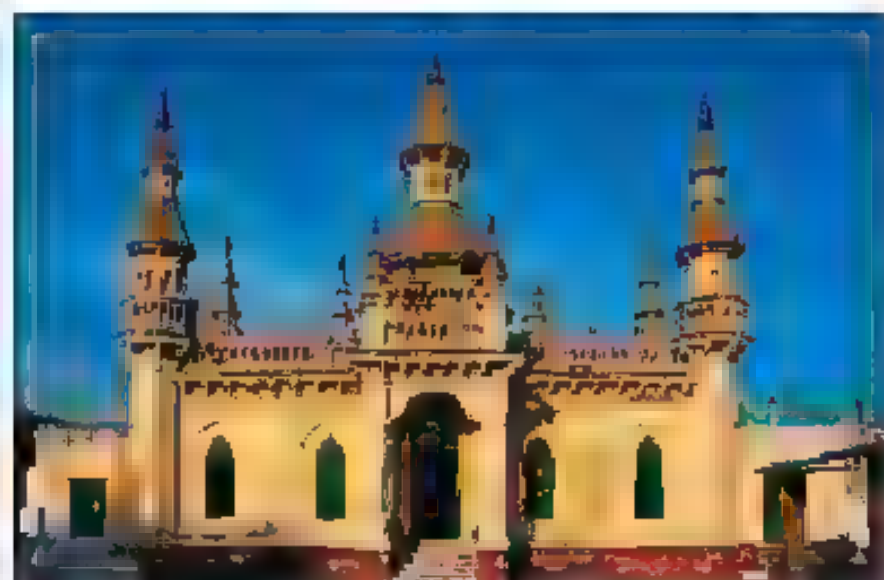
This huge lake, created in the 17th century, lies off Mahatma Gandhi Road, which bisects Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The 3-km (2-mile) stretch of road along its southern boundary is Hyderabad's most popular promenade; it is lined with statues of eminent figures from Andhra Pradesh's

history. At the centre of the lake is a rock, on which stands a 17-m (56-ft) high monolithic statue of the Buddha, weighing 350 tonnes. Completed in 1986, it sank to the bottom of the lake when the ferry carrying it capsized. It was finally salvaged (intact) seven years later and installed on the rock in 1994.

▣ Secunderabad

Northeast of Hussain Sagar along the Tank Bund Road, Secunderabad was established in 1806 as a cantonment to house British troops. It has since grown into a teeming city which is an extension of Hyderabad. At its centre is the **Parade Ground**, overlooked by **St Andrew's Church** and the imposing colonial-style **Secunderabad Club**. The Neo-Gothic **Holy Trinity Church** (built in 1848) is 6 km (4 miles) north of the Parade Ground, and has beautiful stained-glass windows, elegant steeples on its square tower and a British cemetery.

The walled compound of the **Paigah Palaces**, where the Hyderabad aristocracy lived, is 2 km (1.3 miles) west of the Parade Ground, opposite Begumpet Airport. The most imposing palace is Vicar Manzil, built by the leading nontenant at the sixth Nizam's court, Sir Vicar-ul-Umra, he had built the magnificent Falaknuma Palace (see p661), for himself but had to move out when the Nizam decided to acquire it. At its entrance is the **Spanish Mosque** (built in 1906) with Moorish arches and octagonal spires.



The Spanish Mosque at the entrance of Vicar Manzil, Secunderabad

Hyderabadi Culture

Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, who founded Hyderabad in 1591, was an enlightened ruler, and a poet, scholar and patron of the arts. His kingdom was also a flourishing centre of trade, especially in pearls, diamonds and horses. At his court and in his bazaars, Hyderabadi rubbed shoulders with traders, scholars and artisans from different lands. This cosmopolitan

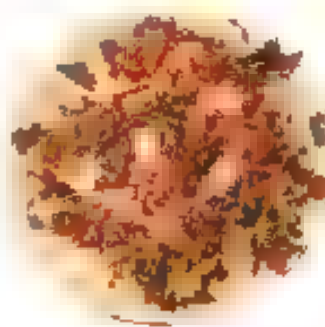


Golden lunch box

tradition, and the culture of courtly elegance and etiquette continued with the next dynasty – that of the Asaf Jahi Nizams which ruled from 1724 until 1947. As a result, Hyderabad has a uniquely composite culture – a mélange of Hindu and Muslim customs, mingled with Arab, Persian and Turkish influences, evident in its language, food, manners and arts.



Bidriware uses a technique introduced by Persians in the 16th century, by which black gunmetal, is intricately inlaid with silver in floral and geometric patterns.



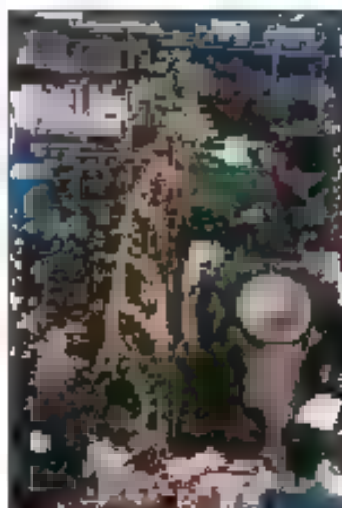
Hyderabad's distinctive cuisine includes dishes of Persian and Turkish origin such as haleem (minced meat cooked with wheat) and lukara (puff pastry squares filled with meat).



Falaknuma Palace, photographed towards the end of the 19th century by the court photographer Lala Deen Dayal, captures the opulence of the Nizam of Hyderabad's lifestyle.



The Nizams' jewels were legendary, and included fabulous pieces such as this 19th-century turban ornament, set with rubies from Burma and diamonds from their mines at Golconda (see p666).



Muharram (see p669) is observed by processions of Shia Muslims carrying decorated tazias through the city. Hyderabad's Shia population is mostly descended from Persians who settled here several generations ago.



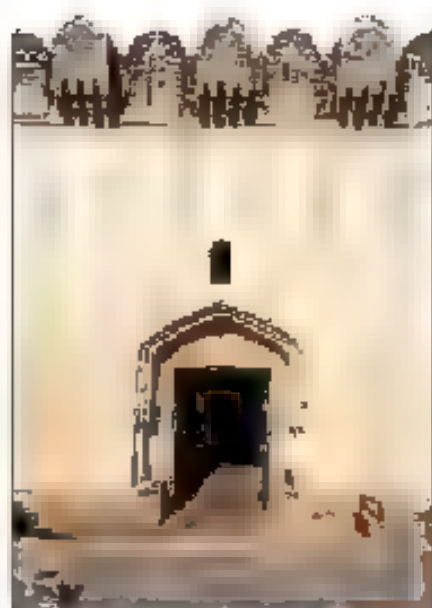
Golconda miniatures often depict the city's sophisticated, cosmopolitan culture. This 18th-century painting shows merchants from many lands calling on a lady.

Golconda



Detail of a carving,
Bala Hisar gate wall

Sprawling across a boulder-strewn plateau, Golconda ("Shepherd's Hill") Fort was the citadel of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, which ruled the Hyderabad region from 1507 to 1687. The earlier 12th-century mud fort that stood here was transformed between 1518 and 1580 into a splendid fortified city of grand palaces, mosques and gardens by successive Qutb Shahi rulers. Golconda Fort was also famous for its great hoard of diamonds, mined nearby, which included the celebrated Kohinoor diamond, now part of the British Crown jewels. The colossal ruins of Golconda cover an area of 40 sq km (15 sq miles).



Bala Hisar Gate, entrance to the
royal complex at Golconda Fort

Golconda Fort

This great fortress is protected by three formidable lines of defence. The first, an outer fortification made of enormous blocks of granite, encircles the citadel and its entire township. The middle wall surrounds the base of the hill, while the innermost one follows the contours of the highest ridge. Visitors enter through the **Fateh Darwaza** ("Victory Gate"), on the east side, which has a Hindu deity carved above its arch. Huge iron spikes are studded into the gate to prevent it from being stormed by elephant cavalries.

From the Fateh Darwaza, the road curves past the **Archaeological Museum** (the old Treasury), and through the bazaar, once a famous centre for cutting and polishing diamonds. Beyond are the two massive arches of the **Habshi Kaman Gate**, with rooms on top. These used to house a drummers' gallery and the **seemans**, Abyssinian guards. This gate leads to the middle fortification wall.

To its north is the austere, domed **Jami Masjid**, built in 1518 by Sultan Qutb Qutb Shah, the founder of the dynasty; he was murdered here while at prayer by his son Jamshed in 1543. Beyond is the ceremonial arch, the **Bala Hisar Gate**, decorated with various Hindu motifs, including *yalis* (fantastic leonine beasts). This is the entrance to the inner citadel, known as the **Bala Hisar Complex**, where the royal palaces, assembly halls, workshops and an armoury are located. North of the Bala Hisar is a walled enclosure, begun in 1652, and planned as an extension to the inner fort. Within it is **Hathion ka Jhaad** ("Elephant Tree"), an extraordinary 700-year-old *Banab* tree.





The royal bath near Rani Mahal, Golconda Fort

(*Adansonia digitata*), said to have been brought to Golconda by the sultan's Abyssinian guards.

The large-domed **Grand Portico** behind the Bala Hisar Gate is a good place to test the remarkable acoustics that were an important feature of the fort's defences. A soft handclap here can be heard in the king's chambers at the summit of the hill.

West of the Grand Portico are the ruins of the Qutb Shahi palaces. The most impressive of these is the **Rani Mahal**, a vaulted hall on a raised terrace, decorated with lovely floral arabesques. Hollows in these carvings were once inlaid with Golconda's famous diamonds and other precious stones. To the west of the Rani Mahal, a steep flight of 200 steps winds past royal baths, granaries, treasuries, water tanks and the remains of gardens, to the summit of the hill. Traces of the elaborate water supply system which carried water to the top of the citadel are visible along the route.

Just below the summit is a graceful mosque built by Sultan Ibrahim Qutb Shah, the third sultan, and the ancient Hindu **Mahakali Temple**, built into a cave.

At the summit of the hill is the three-storeyed **Durbar Hall** ("Throne Room"), with a rooftop pavilion. From here there are wonderful views of the entire fort and its surroundings, which include two pretty structures on hillocks – **Taramati Baradari** and **Premamati's Mosque**. These

are named after the two dancers who were royal favourites, and said to be so lightfooted that they could dance all the way from the pavilion to the Bala Hisar on a tightrope.

Standing outside the fort, east of the Fatch Darwaza, is the **Nau Mahal**

("Nine Palaces"), where the Nizams of Hyderabad held court whenever they came to Golconda.

Qutb Shahi Tombs

1 km (0.6 miles) NW of Golconda Fort. This royal necropolis, where seven of the nine Qutb Shahi rulers are buried, is laid out in gardens with water channels, pools and tree-lined pathways. The tombs, built by each king in his lifetime, display a distinct and eclectic architectural style – they have large onion domes, Persian arches, Turkish columns and Hindu brackets and motifs.

Built of grey granite and plaster, each tomb's dome is set on a petal-leaf base with a richly ornamented gallery and small minarets surrounding it. The **Tomb of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah**, the founder of the city

of Hyderabad, is the most impressive. It is surrounded by a spacious terrace, where poetry and music festivals and Hyderabad food festivals are occasionally held. Traces of brilliant turquoise and green enameled tiles, which once

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Hyderabad district, 9 km (6 miles) W of Hyderabad. daily **Son et Lumière** (English), Mar–Oct: 7pm daily; Nov–Feb: 6.30pm daily

Archaeological Museum and Qutb Shahi Tombs

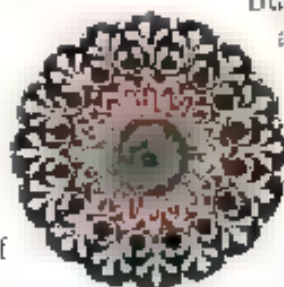
Sat–Thu.



The elegant tomb of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, Golconda

covered the façades of all the tombs, still remain. Other remarkable monuments are the **Tomb of Queen Hayat Baksh Begum**, the wife of Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah and the mosque behind it (both mid-17th century), decorated with exquisite floral designs and calligraphy.

At the centre of the complex is the simple but beautifully proportioned **Royal Mortuary Bath**. The bodies of the deceased kings were ritually bathed before burial on the inlaid, 12-sided platform; the surrounding 12 water tanks symbolize the 12 Shia Imams.



Ceiling decoration, Bala Hisar Gate



A panoramic view of Golconda Fort

Pochampalli ⑤

Nalgonda district, 50 km (31 miles)
E of Hyderabad 🚗 🚚 🚊 daily

Andhra Pradesh's ikat belt where intricate tie-and-dye textiles (see p317) are woven borders Hyderabad.

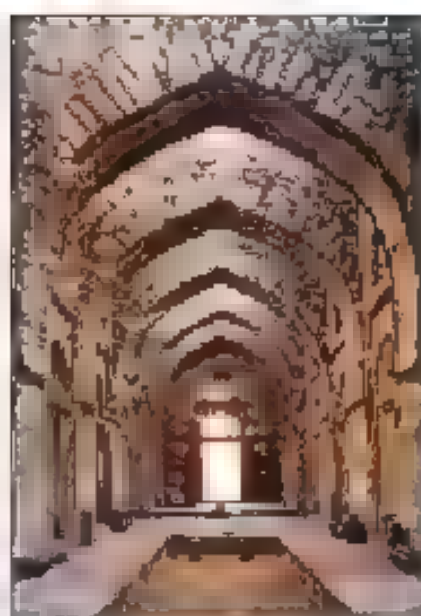
Pochampalli, the name by which most of the state's ikat fabric is known, is the largest centre for this craft. The technique in its present form was first introduced in the 19th century in Chirala, in Guntur district, from where the fabric was exported to Africa.

Pochampalli's main street is lined with busy workshops where the various stages of production take place. Ikat weavers first tie the yarn according to the pattern and then dye them in great vats. A special oil-based technique is used to restrict the dye to those parts of the yarn that need to be coloured. The dyed yarn is then dried in the sun and finally woven on large hand-operated looms, to produce a cloth called *tetta rimal* (see p413). The state cooperative warehouses, as well as several shops, sell a wide range of beautiful silk saris and fabrics.

Environs

The neighbouring villages of and **Choutuppal** produce mainly cotton-ikat fabrics.

Narayanpur, another major weaving centre, is about 20 km (16 miles) further down the Vijaywada Highway.



Khush Mahal, the audience hall at Warangal Fort

Warangal ①

Warangal district, 140 km (87 miles)
SW of Hyderabad. 🚗 🚚 🚊 APTDC
Kazipet, (0870) 244 6606.

A major *dhurrie*-weaving centre today, Warangal was described by the 15th-century Venetian traveller Marco Polo as one of the principal cities of South India. It was the capital of the Hindu Kakatiya kings, who dominated this region until the beginning of the 14th century.

An ancient fort at the edge of the modern town is all that remains of this once grand city. Built during the reign of the Kakatiya queen Rudramadevi (r.1262–89), its striking circular plan, with three concentric rings of walls, is still intact. The outer two rings, both of mud, define a circle 1.2 km (1 mile) in diameter. The innermost ring is made

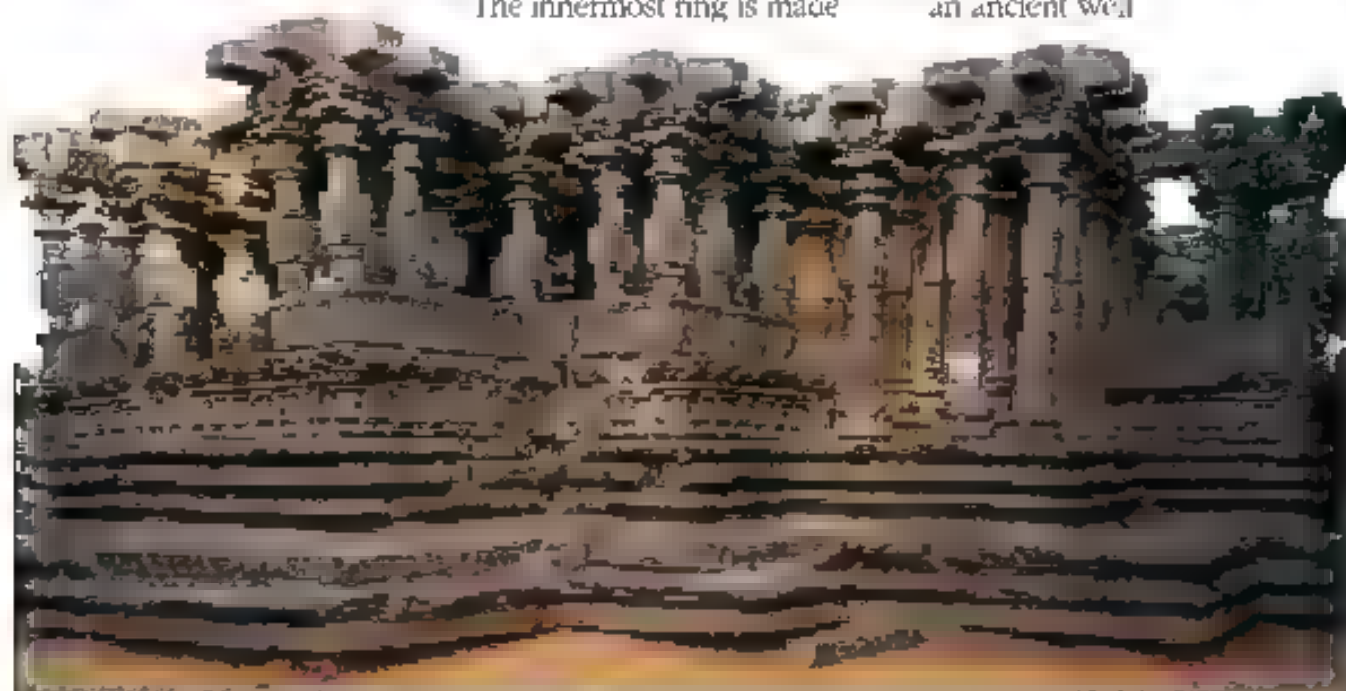
of stone, with four massive gateways at the cardinal points. At its geometric centre, four ornate *toranas* (gateways), marking the sacred precinct, are the only remains of a great Shiva temple that once stood here. The *toranas* themselves are remarkable for their size and beauty.

A short distance to the west is the **Khush Mahal**, an audience hall that was built by Muslim invaders in the 14th century. Massive angled walls with slit windows define a lofty interior with vaulted arches, though the roof is quite damaged. It is remarkably similar to the Hincola Mahal in Mandu (see p247).

Environs

Hanamkonda, the site of the first Kakatiya capital before it moved to Warangal, is 3 km (2 miles) northwest of Warangal. A magnificent thousand-pillared temple here, dedicated to Shiva, was erected in 1163 by Rudradeva (r.1158–95), the first great Kakatiya king.

This grey-green basalt temple, known as the *trikula* or triple shrine, consists of a trio of shrines dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu, and Surya. They are connected to a *mandapa*, now roofless, by a platform with a magnificently polished Nandi bull. The columns have sharply cut, lathe-turned shafts. A ceiling panel carved with an image of Nataraja (see p566) covers the central bay. The temple's gardens contain several small linga shrines, and an ancient well.



The magnificent thousand-pillared temple at Hanamkonda, near Warangal.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p717 and p743



The 13th-century Ramappa Temple at Palampet

Palampet 5

Palampet district, 70 km (44 miles) SW of Hyderabad

This village is dominated by the **Ramappa Temple**, the best preserved example of Kakatiya architecture. Dedicated to Shiva, it was built in 1234 by Recherla Rudra, a general of the ruler Ganapatideva (r 1199–1262). Like the temple at Hanamkonda, it too has a spacious *mandapa* with beautifully sculpted black basalt columns. This *mandapa*, cruciform in plan, also has porches with balcony seats on three sides. The eaves sheltering the peripheral

columns are supported by angled struts, many of which are fashioned as three-dimensional maidens with graceful bodies in dancing poses. Other similar but smaller relief figures, as well as scenes from the epics, are seen in the central ceiling panel within the *mandapa*.

The exterior of the sanctuary, in contrast, is devoid of any carvings. The restrained ornamentation and simple modelling are typical of the elegance of Kakatiya art. A stone pavilion sheltering a Nandi, smaller in size than the one at Hanamkonda but as exquisitely carved, stands in front of the temple.

South of the Ramappa Temple is **Ramappa Cheruvu**, a vast artificial lake created by Recherla Rudra, and surrounded by picturesque hills.



Carving, Ghanpur

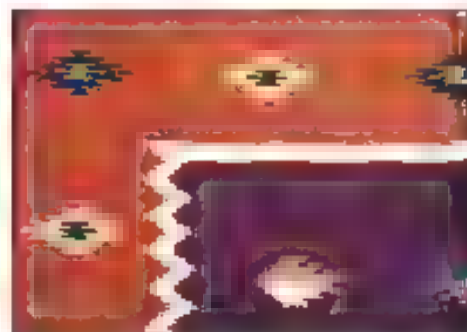
Environs

More Kakatiya temples can be seen at **Ghanpur**, a little village 13 km (8 miles) northwest of Palampet. The largest consists of a pair of Shiva shrines, both with *mandapas* and balcony seats. The main shrine has delightful female *dvarapalas* (door-keepers), dancing maidens and finely carved brackets. Other minor shrines dot the walled compound.

TRADITIONAL ANDHRA DHURRIES

Although lustrous silk and wool carpets from Persia and Turkey embellished the palaces of the Nizams of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh has long had a local tradition of carpet weaving in Warangal and Eluru. Commonly known as *dhurries*, the rugs are made in both cotton and wool, in a variety of designs and colours. The cotton *dhurries* from Warangal are usually woven into geometric patterns, while the woollen carpets of Eluru (314 km/195 miles southeast of Warangal) sport floral designs that hint at a Western

influence. The more expensive *shatranjis* (a chessboard-like pattern) are made with heavy cotton thread and produced on horizontal looms. The *kalamkari* craftsmen of Sri Kalahasti (see p680), make rugs in traditional designs on a jute base using vegetable dyes.



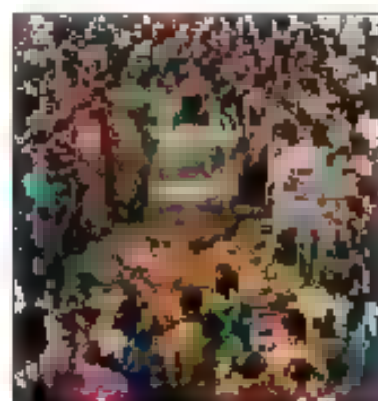
A dhurrie with geometric patterns

FESTIVALS OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Ugadi (Mar) Homes are spring-cleaned throughout the state and special food is prepared to celebrate the Telugu New Year.

Mrigasira (Jun)

Hyderabad. On this day a unique cure for asthma is administered to patients from all over India who swallow live a small freshwater fish called *maral*. Many sufferers claim miraculous cures.



Batkamma Festival, Warangal

Batkamma (Sep/Oct),

Warangal. This festival in honour of the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, begins just before Dussehra and continues for nine days. Flowers are arranged over a turmeric representation of the goddess and carried on a bamboo tray to a lake or river where the women dance in a circle around the floral offering before immersing it in the water.

Festival of Andhra Pradesh (Nov)

Hyderabad. This ten-day cultural festival marks the anniversary of Andhra Pradesh's statehood. The state's best musicians and dancers perform.

Muharram (Feb/Mar),

Hyderabad. The Shia Muslim community commemorates the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Hussain, at the battle of Karbala, with 40 days of mourning. On the final day, gem-studded *alam*s and colourful *tazias* (replicas of his tomb) are carried in procession through the Old City.



A view of the Visakhapatnam harbour on the Bay of Bengal

Visakhapatnam

Visakhapatnam district 350 km (218 miles) N of Vijayawada 969,600 12 km (7 miles) W of town centre, then bus or taxi. APTDC, RTC Complex, (0891, 278 8820. daily

The second busiest port in India after Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, also known as Vizag, is rapidly becoming the largest shipyard in the country. It is an important industrial town and naval base as well. The town makes a convenient point from which to visit some of the beautiful beaches along the Bay of Bengal and the many picturesque temple towns of the northern coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Named after Visakha, the Hindu God of Valour, Visakhapatnam was once part of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka's vast empire (see p42). Later, it was ruled by the Andhra kings of Vengi and other South Indian dynasties, including the Pallavas, Cholas and Gangas. In the 15th century it became part of the Vijayanagar Empire (see pp530-31). It finally came into British hands in the 17th century, after which it was developed into a major port.

Looming above the port is a hilly ridge with three crests, each with a religious shrine. On the southernmost one **Venkateshvara Konda**, is a temple dedicated to Balaji (Krishna); in the middle is **Ross Hill** with a mid-19th-century church; the third **Dargah Konda** has a shrine

dedicated to a Muslim saint Ismaque Madina.

Along the southern coastline is **Dolphin's Nose**, a 358-m (1,175-ft) long rocky outcrop that rises 175 m (574 ft) above the sea. On it stands a

lighthouse with a beam that can be seen 64 km (40 miles) out at sea. Vestiges of the city's colonial past are visible here in an old Protestant church, a fort, barracks and an arsenal all dating to the 18th century.

Idyllic beaches, set on the fringes of the Eastern Ghats and bounded by forested hills and rocky cliffs, include the **Ramakrishna Mission Beach**, now being developed as a tourist resort by Andhra Pradesh Tourism, **Rishikonda Beach** and **Lawson's Bay**.

Towards the north of the town, beyond Lawson's Bay, is **Kailasagiri**, a forested hill which has several lookout points for a panoramic view

of the city and harbour. The twin town of **Waltair** once a health resort for British officers, is north of the bay. Andhra University, one of the largest campuses in the state is also situated here, along with a number of pretty 19th-century churches.

Environs

Simhachalam the "Lion's Hill Temple, dedicated to Lord Varaha Narasimha, an incarnation of Vishnu (see p679), stands at the summit of the thickly forested Ratnagiri Hill 16 km (10 miles) northwest of Visakhapatnam. A flight of steps leads to the northern gateway, an elaborately decorated *gopura* that is the main entrance to the temple. Inside the compound is a tall *dvajastambha* (flagpole). Similar in

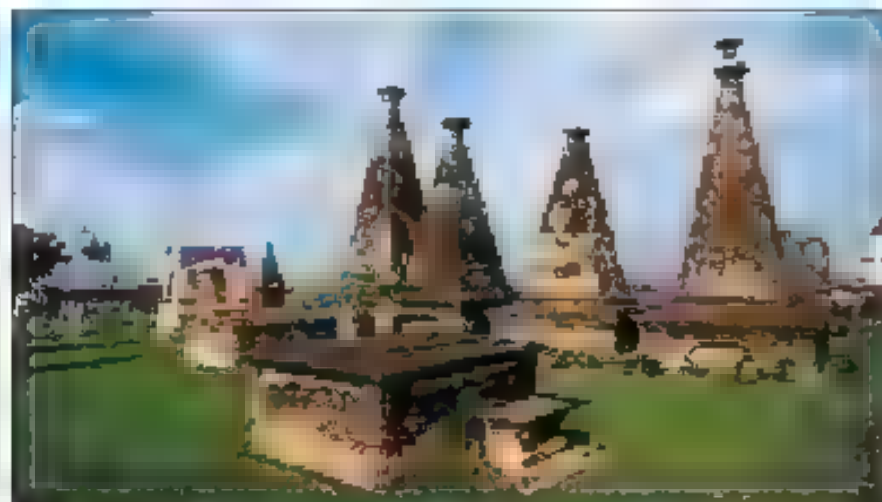
style to Konark's Sun Temple (see pp310-11), the temple was constructed in the 9th or 10th century, and was extensively rebuilt during the 13th century. It is believed that the

presiding deity was originally Shiva, but he was replaced by this incarnation of Vishnu after the reformer-saint, Ramanuja (see p522) visited the site in the 11th century.

Bheemunipatnam is a 24-km (15-mile) drive north from Visakhapatnam, along one of the longest stretches of beach road in the country. This quiet fishing village, situated at the mouth of the Gosthani river, was a Dutch settlement in the early 17th century.

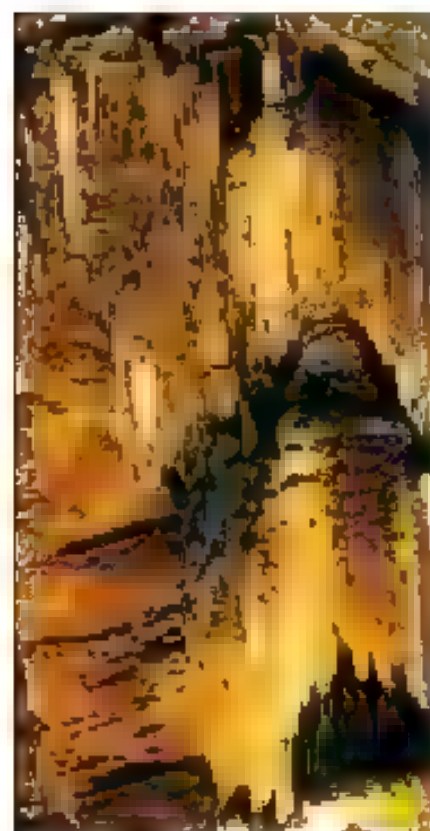


Dutch heraldry, Bheemunipatnam



Obelisk-shaped Dutch tombs at Bheemunipatnam

Bimlipatam, as it was then known (locally referred to as Bhamli) was the site of Maratha attacks and Anglo-Dutch wars throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Its Dutch legacy can be seen in some of the old colonnaded houses, the ruined fort and the Dutch cemetery, which has unusual obelisk-shaped tombstones.



A fascinating stalactite formation inside the Borra Caves

Borra Caves 7

Visakhapatnam district. 100 km (62 miles) N of Visakhapatnam.
☐ daily

Close to the northern border of Visakhapatnam district are these magnificent limestone caves, discovered in 1807 by William King of the the Geological Survey of India. The extensive underground chambers, lined by stalactites and stalagmites, are now being

developed by the state tourism department as a major attraction for visitors. Some smaller stalagmites are worshipped as lingas, with Nandi bulls placed in front of them. The local people believe that the water trickling from the roof of the caves is from a mountain spring which is the source of the Godavari river.

Environs

About 22 km (14 miles) northeast of Borra is the **Araku Valley**, home of several tribal communities, the state's original inhabitants. The road to Araku goes past forests and coffee plantations, and the valley, with its woods, waterfalls and bracing climate, offers pleasant walks.



Tribal women from Araku Valley

Ramatirtham 8

Visakhapatnam district. 72 km (45 miles) NE of Visakhapatnam.

Remains from the Ikshvaku period (3rd to 4th centuries AD) when Buddhism flourished in this area, can be seen at Ramatirtham. Just outside the village is a group of structures on a hill known as Garubhaktakonda ("Hill of the Devoted Disciple"). On a narrow rocky ledge about 165 m (541 ft) above the surrounding plains are the ruins of a stupa, monasteries, and prayer halls enclosing smaller stupas. Close by, on another hill called Durgakonda, is a similar set of ruins, along with carvings of Jain *tirthankaras* (see p396) that date from the 8th and 9th centuries.

Srikakulam District 9

108 km (67 miles) N from Visakhapatnam to Srikakulam.

The headquarters of Andhra Pradesh's northernmost district, Srikakulam is located

on the banks of the Swarnamukhi river. On the outskirts of the town, at **Arasavalli**, is a sun temple, ingeniously constructed at such an angle that the sun's rays fall directly on the deity's feet twice a year.

The **Srikurmanatha Temple** at Srikurman,

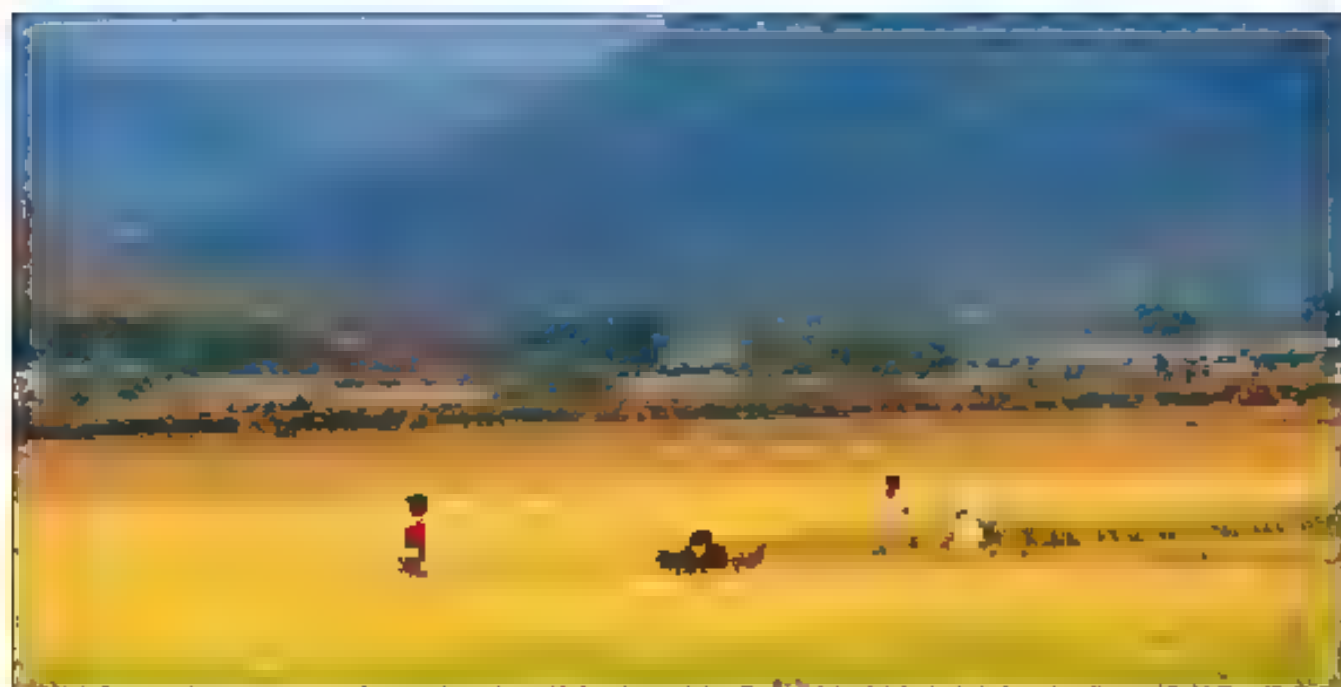
13 km (8 miles) east of Srikakulam, is

dedicated to Kurma, the tortoise incarnation of Vishnu. It was built by the Chalukya kings in the 10th century but was substantially rebuilt by the Cholas in the 12th and 13th centuries. The colonnade around the main shrine has 19th century murals of Krishna and Vishnu.

Mukhalingam 46 km (29 miles) north of Srikakulam was the first capital of the Eastern Ganga kings, before they moved to Orissa (see p44). The temples here date to their reign, between the 9th and 13th centuries. The best preserved is the 9th-century Madhukeshvara Temple, with magnificent sculptures of Shiva and friezes of scenes from the Krishna legend. The 10th-century Someshvara Temple, at the entrance to the town, has beautiful statues of river goddesses and other deities flanking the main doorway.



Mural showing Krishna surrounded by gopis, at Srikurmanatha Temple in Srikakulam district



Ripening fields of paddy with the Eastern Ghats in the background, near Rajahmundry

East Godavari District 10

380 km (236 miles) E from Hyderabad to Rajahmundry 📍 Rajahmundry 📍

The Godavari, one of South India's most sacred rivers, swells to a wide torrent (at places 6 km/4 miles across), just north of **Rajahmundry** town. Lush paddy fields and sugarcane plantations characterize the countryside.

Rajahmundry, the largest town in East Godavari district, is best known for the many Chalukya temples in its vicinity and for the 2,743-m (8,999-ft) long bridge that spans the river. The lookout points on **Dowleshvaram Dam** (built 1818–52), 10 km (6 miles) downstream, offer spectacular views of the river. Every 12 years, the Dakshina Pusakaram festival – the Kumh Mela (see p211) of the South – takes place here.

Peddapuram, famous for its fine handwoven silk and cotton, is 30 km (19 miles) northeast of Rajahmundry, on the road to Visakhapatnam.

Annavaram, 70 km (44 miles) to the northeast of Rajahmundry, is the site of the Satyanarayana Temple, on Ratnagiri Hill, renowned for its 4-m (13-ft)-high statue of the Hindu Trinity, and its ancient sundia.

The **Godavari Gorge** begins 80 km (50 miles) north of Rajahmundry. A drive or boat ride along the Gorge, which

cuts through the hilly Eastern Ghats, offers views of spectacular scenery, with a series of beautiful lakes that many visitors have found reminiscent of Italy and Scotland.

Ryali, 24 km (15 miles) south of Rajahmundry, has a Chalukya temple dedicated to Vishnu. It houses a stone image of the Goddess Ganga (see p163), from which flows a continuous trickle of water.

Draksharamam, 40 km (25 miles) southeast of Rajahmundry, is famed for its 10th-century Bhimesvara Temple, which combines the Chalukya and Chola styles of architecture, and houses a 5-m (16-ft) high linga. The Godavari is said to have been split into seven streams by the saptarishis (seven great sages) of Hindu mythology, and three of these streams are believed to have gone underground here. Close to the town is an old Dutch cemetery, locally known as O'landi Dibba ("Holland Mound"), with gravestones dated between 1675 and 1728, some with very elaborate designs.

Antarvedi, on the banks of the Vashishta river, a branch of the Godavari, is 112 km (70 miles) south of Rajahmundry. It is best reached by boat from Narsapur on the south bank. The Lakshminarayana Temple (built in 1823), with its brightly painted tower, stands on the river bank, and is usually thronged with pilgrims who come for a dip in the holy river.

Machilipatnam 11

Krishna district 340 km (211 miles) E of Hyderabad 📍 📍 📍 daily

One of the first European settlements on India's eastern coast, Machilipatnam ("City of Fish") was a thriving port and textile centre in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was also the headquarters of the English East India Company on the Coromandel Coast. The French and the Dutch briefly established themselves here as well. The Dutch cemetery, with its ornate tombstones, are all that remain from that period.

Machilipatnam was hit by a giant tidal wave in 1864, which drowned more than 30,000 people. It was caused by a volcanic eruption at Mount Krakatoa, 5,000 km (3,107 miles) away. After that, it lost its importance as a port, but it remains famous for its *kalamkari* textiles (see p680).



A *kalamkari* blockprinter at work in Machilipatnam

Trade Textiles: Tree of Life

Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the Coromandel Coast, with Machilipatnam as its trade centre and port, was one of the main producers and exporters of cotton textiles to Western Europe. At first just items of barter, they soon became fashionable in Europe, increasing the demand for the region's dye painted cotton

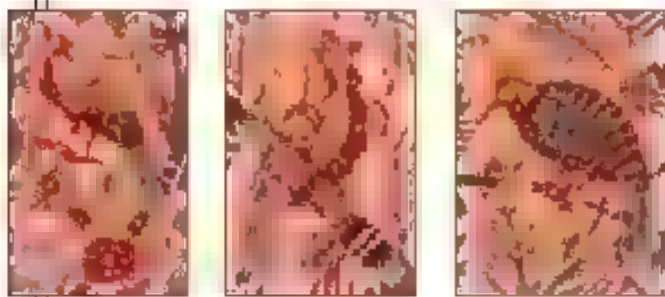


Detail of flowers and foliage

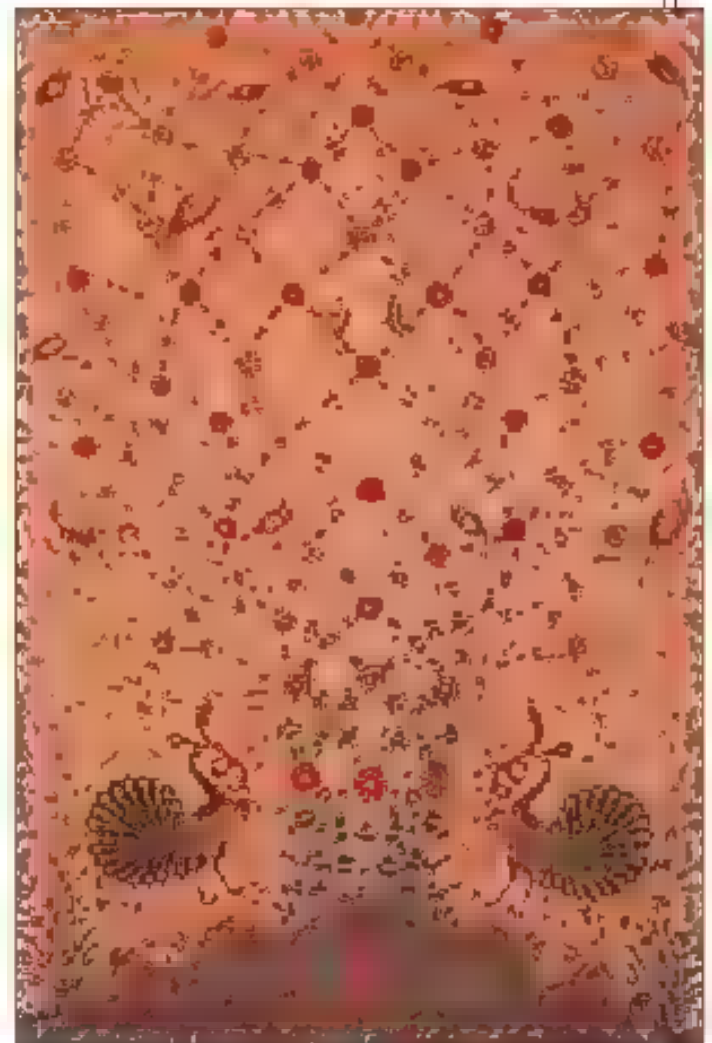
kalamkari (see p680) fabric, known in Europe as chintz. Special designs were commissioned, among them the Tree of Life, which absorbed techniques and aesthetics from India, Persia, China and Europe. Valued for their richness of colour and design, they were widely used as hangings and spreads in European homes.

TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life was a very popular motif in textiles from the Coromandel Coast. Based on ancient nature myths that deified plants and trees, and inspired largely by Persian miniatures, its central flowering tree, rising from a rocky mound, linked earth to heaven and symbolized creation.



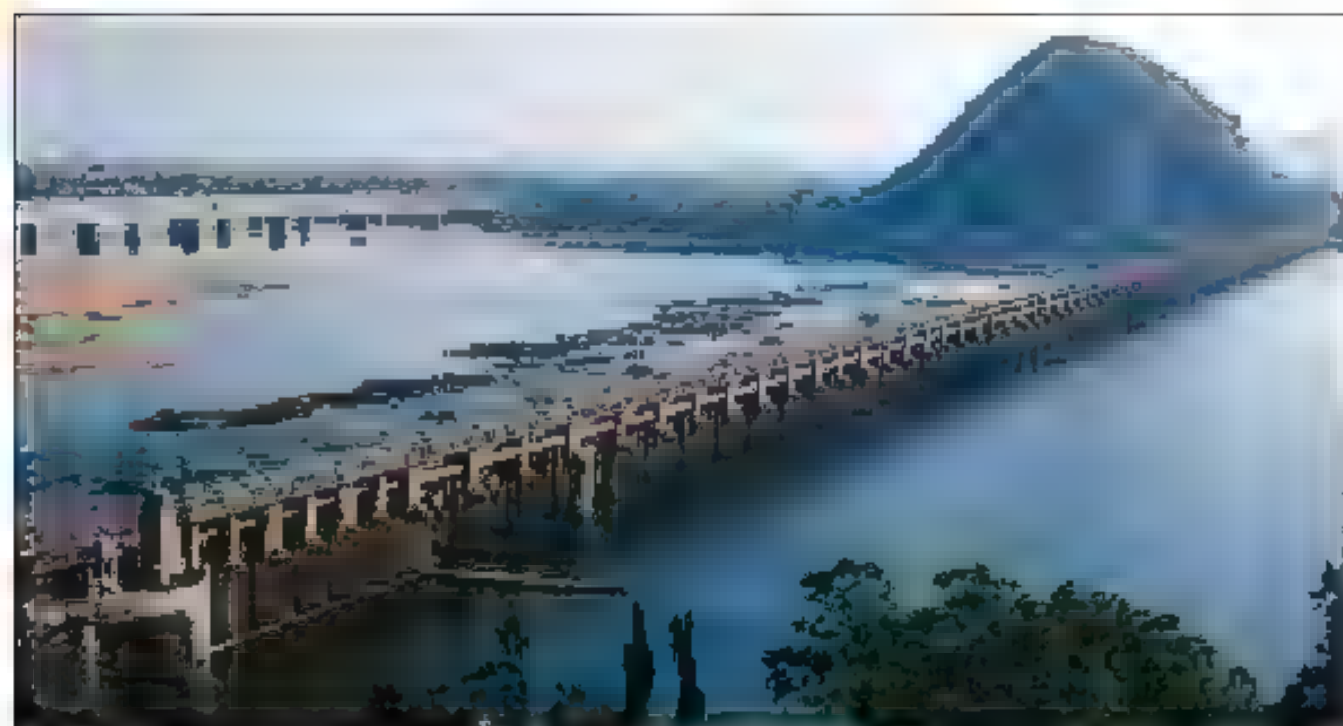
Birds real and mythical inhabit the thickly foliated upper branches of the tree. Standing on the mound are two stylized peacocks holding snakes in their beaks.



Aquatic creatures, such as fish and tortoise, are depicted to show marine life in the holy waters below the Sacred Mound. Shades of indigo have been used to create the effect of rippling waves and flowing water.

A bamboo thicket, composed as a single Tree of Life, rises from the Sacred Mound. The painted and printed flowers and feathery leaves suggest nature's exuberance.





A view of the Prakasam Barrage, built over the Krishna river at Vijayawada

Vijayawada ②

Krishna district 267 km (166 miles)
SE of Hyderabad. 825,400
 APTDC, (0866) 257 1393.
 daily.

The third largest city in the state, Vijayawada is a busy commercial town with one of the largest railway junctions in the country. In a picturesque spot on the northern bank of the Krishna river, it is bounded on three sides by the Indrakulam Hills. The area around the river banks is a pleasant contrast to the noisy, crowded town.

Within the city limits, on a low hill to the east, is the **Kanakadurga Temple**, dedicated to the goddess Lakshmi. The **Victoria Jubilee Museum**, on Bunder Road, houses a fine collection of Buddhist and Hindu relics from the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Especially impressive are the white limestone Standing Buddha from the nearby Buddhist site of Alijiri (3rd or 4th century), and the powerful depiction of Durga slaying the buffalo demon Mahisa (2nd century).

On the outskirts of town is the 1-km (0.6-mile) long **Prakasam Barrage**, first built in 1855 and extensively reconstructed in 1955. It irrigates nearly 1.2 million ha (3 million acres) of land, turning the Krishna Delta into the richest granary in Andhra Pradesh. **Bhavani Island**, a scenic picnic

spot, is just upstream, reached by launch from the river bank.

Victoria Jubilee Museum
 Sat-Thu. extra charges.

Enviroms

Mogalrajapuram, 3 km (2 miles) east of Vijayawada, and **Undavalli**, 1 km (2.5 miles) to the south, on the other side of the river, are famous for their rock-cut temples, 5th–7th centuries.

Mangalgi, 12 km (7 miles) south of Vijayawada, is a textile village, specializing in fine cotton saris and striped and checked fabrics. It also has the impressive 14th-century Lakshmi Narasimha Temple complex, with a small Garuda shrine in front of it.

Kondapalli ③

Krishna district 14 km (9 miles) W of Vijayawada

This pretty village, famous for its painted wooden toys, is dominated by the 8th-century H.I. Fort built by the Eastern Chalukya dynasty. Encircled by ramparts and towers, the fort was an important stronghold in the Krishna Valley under the Qutb Shahas of Hyderabad (see p666), in the 16th century. At the crest of the hill, a steep climb up, is the ruined Tanasa Matha palace. The path descends past a deep tank, the granary and the armoury to the Goleonda Gate, which faces northwest towards Hyderabad.

KONDAPALLI TOYS

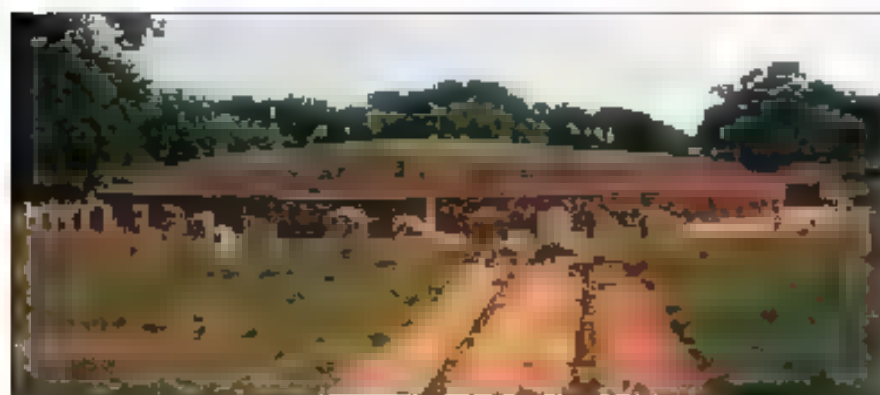


Lord Krishna

The craft of toy-making has been passed down for many generations in Kondapalli. In the hands of the deft artisans, the light yet strong and flexible *poniki* wood is fashioned into distinctive figures of gods and goddesses, fruits and vegetables, which adorn many Andhra homes during festivals. Each part of the toy is whittled into shape, and then glued together using a special tamarind seed glue. The piece is then covered with lime glue, which gives it a smooth finish. It is allowed to dry before being brightly painted in vivid blues, greens, reds and yellows, with touches of black.



A toy being painted in bright colours



The Maha Chaitya at Amravati, now only a low earthen mound

Amravati 10

Guntur district 30 km (19 miles) W of Vijayawada from Guntur from Hotel Krishnaveni, Vijayawada run by AP Tourism, Vijayawada Haritha Hotel 108645 255 332

Renowned for its **Maha Chaitya** or 'Great Stupa', Amravati was once the most impressive of the many Buddhist religious settlements along the Krishna Valley. Today, nothing remains of this stupa except a low earthen mound, but in its day it was reputed to be the largest and most elaborate stupa in South India. It was built by the Satavahanas, the great Andhra dynasty, in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC (see p43).

The Maha Chaitya was enlarged several times by the Ikshvaku kings, who succeeded the Satavahanas, reaching its final form between the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. Clad in the local white limestone, the Maha Chaitya was an earthen hemispherical mound, about 15 m (148 ft) in diameter and more than 30 m (98 ft) in height, including its supporting drum and capping finial. It was surrounded by a 6-m (20-ft) high railing with posts and cross pieces, and lofty entrance gateways at the cardinal points, all exuberantly carved.

In the 5th century, when South India saw a revival of Hinduism, the stupa was

abandoned and remained so until a British official, Colonel Colin Mackenzie, began excavating the site in 1796. Unfortunately, by the time a thorough investigation of the ruins began in the mid-19th century, most of the limestone portions had been pilaged, many fine pieces having been shipped to Britain.

Nevertheless, a great deal of fine sculpture remains at the site, and is on display at the **Archaeological Museum**, next to the Maha Chaitya. Unlike the stupa at Sanchi (see pp214-5) where the Buddha is represented through symbols such as the Bodhi Tree or footprints, the Amravati sculptures show him in human form. The museum's display includes large standing Buddha images, some more than 2 m (7 ft) high, whose natural poses and elegantly fluted robes suggest the influence of late Roman classical art. The second gallery has a remarkable life-sized ceremonial bull,

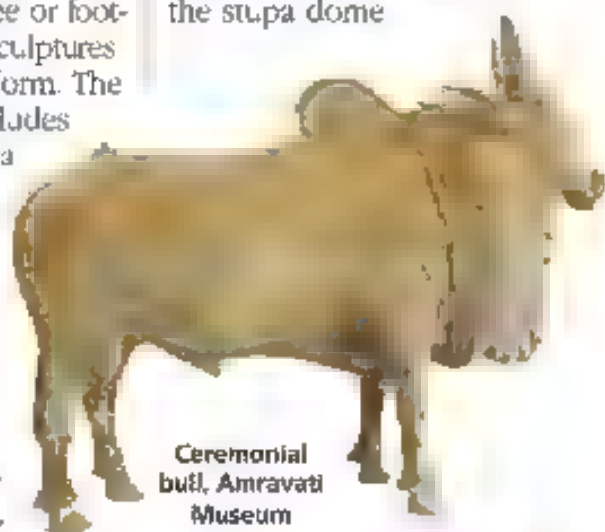
reconstructed from fragments discovered in 1980. A part of the stupa's railing, decorated with scenes from the Buddha's life, is reconstructed in the courtyard. Other exhibits include an instructive model of the original monument and superb sculptures of the Bodhi Tree, under which the Buddha is said to have meditated.

Archaeological Museum

Sat-Thu extra charges

Environs

Overlooking the Krishna river just north of the museum is the **Amareshvara Temple**. Built during the 10th and 11th centuries, it was renovated in the 18th century by a local chief whose statue stands in the outer hall. The sanctuary and the open-columned hall are in a walled compound. A basement, reached by a flight of stairs, is believed to conceal the remains of a stupa, suggested by the pillar-shaped linga in the sanctuary which was probably part of the stupa dome.



Ceremonial bull, Amravati Museum

THE AMRAVATI SCULPTURES

The surviving limestone carvings from the Maha Chaitya are now divided between the Archaeological Museum at Amravati, the Government Museum in Chennai (see p565) and the British Museum in London. These reliefs testify to the vitality of early Buddhist art traditions in South India. Posts and railings show ornate lotus medallions, friezes of garlands carried by dwarfs, and Jataka Tales (see p480) illustrated with vivid scenes of crowds, horse riders and courtiers. Drum panels are adorned with pots filled with lotuses, model stupas with serpents wrapped around the drums, and flying celestials above the umbrella-like umbels.








Limestone carving, Amravati Museum



Amravati limestone carving with a scene from the Jataka Tales

Nagarjunakonda ⑤

Guntur district, 175 km (109 miles) W of Vijayawada  Macherla, 22 km (14 miles) SE of site, then bus to Vijayapuri   daily from Vijayapuri, except Fri.  Vijay Vihar, (08680) 277 362  from Hyderabad

Nagarjunakonda or "Nagarjuna's Hill" on the banks of the Krishna river, was named after Nagarjuna Acharya, the 2nd-century Buddhist theologian and founder of an influential school of philosophy. Once a sophisticated Buddhist settlement, with large monasteries and stupas, wide roads and public baths, it was established in the 3rd and 4th centuries, when the area flourished under the rule of the powerful Ikshvaku kings.

Thereafter, Nagarjunakonda was ruled by a succession of dynasties, culminating with the Vijayanagar rulers, who built a fort around the Buddhist ruins. When the Vijayanagar Empire declined, the area was abandoned. It was rediscovered only between 1954 and 1961.

In the early 1960s, when the huge Nagarjuna Sagar Dam was being constructed across the Krishna, a number of these rediscovered ancient Buddhist settlements were threatened with submersion. However the Archaeological Survey of India salvaged and reconstructed many of them, brick by brick, on top of the hill where the citadel once used to stand.

Today, most of the hill, and the secluded valley in which



View of the hemispherical stupa, Bodhisattva Chaitya, Nagarjunakonda

these settlements once stood, have been submerged by the waters of the Nagarjuna Sagar lake. Only the top of the hill, where the rescued remains have been reassembled, juts out like an island. The island is accessible by launches, which leave regularly from the small village of Vijayapuri, on the banks of the lake.

On the island, the path from the jetty leads first to the **Simha Vihara 4**. This comprises a stupa built on a high platform with a pair of *chaitya grihas* (prayer halls) adjoining it. While one of the *chaitya grihas* houses a second stupa, the other enshrines a monumental sculpture of the Standing Buddha. The **Bodhisattva Chaitya**, opposite it, has a raised stupa contained within a semi-circular-ended brick structure. To its west is the **Maha Chaitya** stupa which, with a

diameter of 27.5 m (90 ft), was one of the largest at Nagarjunakonda. Its internal rubble walls radiate outwards like the spokes of a wheel, and are filled with earth. Just ahead of it is the **Swastika Chaitya**, named after the Indian swastika emblem formed by its rubble walls.

Near the citadel walls is a stone megalith, some 2,000 years old. It conceals a simple burial chamber that once contained four skulls.




To its east is the **Archaeological Museum**, which houses superb Buddhist sculptures from the ruins of Nagarjunakonda. They include limestone reliefs and



Detail of a carving, Nagarjunakonda

panels carved with seated Buddhas, flying celestial beings and miniature replicas of stupas. Friezes from the railings which surrounded the stupas depict scenes from the Buddha's life. Among the free-standing sculptures are dignified Buddha figures dressed in elegant robes.

Archaeological Museum

 Sar Thu  

Environs

More structures from the Ikshvaku period are reassembled at a site 15 km (9 miles) south of Vijayapuri. These include a stadium with tiered galleries around a central court, possibly used for musical and theatrical performances and sporting events. The adjacent Monastic Complex has shrines and *chaitya grihas* as well as a refectory, store and baths.



A giant-sized statue of the Standing Buddha in Nagarjunakonda

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p717 and p743

Srisaïlam & Krishna Gorge 16

Kurnool district. 225 km (140 miles), S of Hyderabad. 🚆 daily from Hyderabad 🏠 **Haritha Hotel**. APTDC (08524) 287 411, **Purnama Hotel**, Srisaïlam, (08524) 288 311 🗓️ *Shivaratri* (Feb/Mar)

The pretty temple town of Srisaïlam, situated in the thickly wooded Nallamalai Hills, overlooking the deep Krishna Gorge, is a popular pilgrimage spot. Dominating the town is the **Malikarjuna-swamy Temple** whose white tiered *gopurams*, standing atop fortress-like walls, are visible from a great distance. The temple, which houses one of the 12 *jyotirlingas* (naturally formed lingas said to contain the light of Shiva) is believed to date to pre-Vedic times though the present structure was built in the 15th century. The carvings on the walls represent Shiva in his many forms. A pillared hallway leads to the inner shrine, guarded by a monolithic Nandi bull.

Further up the hill is the **Hatakeswaram Temple** said to be the spot where the philosopher-saint Shankaracharya (see p648) wrote one of his celebrated treatises. A small Shiva temple at the summit, **Sikharam**, offers breathtaking views of the valley.

The dammed waters of the Krishna power a huge hydroelectric project at Srisaïlam. When the waters are high enough, a luxury launch, the *Zaria*, ferries visitors from the reservoir at Nagarjuna Sagar to Srisaïlam Dam. For almost half the distance between the reservoir and Srisaïlam Dam, the river passes through a thick forest reserve, habitat of the tiger, panther and hyena. The river, which runs very deep at Srisaïlam, is known here as the Patal Ganga ("Underground Ganges") – according to legend, it springs from an underground tributary of the Ganges. On the ghats close to the dam, boatmen offer enchanting rides on their basin-shaped reed and bamboo boats.



The Sangameshwara Temple outside Alampur village

Alampur 17

Mahboobnagar district. 200 km (124 miles) S of Hyderabad. 🚆 🚆

This village, on the northern bank of the Tungabhadra river, is the site of the earliest Hindu temples in Andhra Pradesh. Constructed by the Chalukyas of Badami (see pp536–7) in the 7th and 8th centuries, the nine red sandstone shrines are collectively known as the **Nava Brahma Temples**, and are dedicated to Shiva.

The layout conforms to a standard scheme – each temple faces east, has an inner sanctum, a pillared *mandapa*, and is surrounded by a passage. The tower over the inner sanctum, capped by an *amalaka* (circular ribbed stone),

shows the distinct influence of North Indian temple architecture (see p20).

The later temples in the group have porches with perforated stone screens on three sides of the passageways, as in the **Svarga Brahma Temple**.



Naga (Snake deity) from the Archaeological Museum, Alampur

built in AD 689. This beautiful temple has outstanding sculptures, including a complete set of *dikpatis* (guardian figures) in the corner niches, and icons of Shiva in various forms. Some columns in the interior have been elaborately carved, such as those in the **Padma Brahma Temple**. The pillars here have seated lions at the base, fluted shafts and ribbed pot-shaped capitals.



Detail from the Padma Brahma Temple

The **Bala Brahma Temple** is the only one of the group, still in use. The **Archaeological Museum**, next to the complex, has a fine collection of early Chalukya sculptures. Just outside the village is the reconstructed **Sangameshwara**

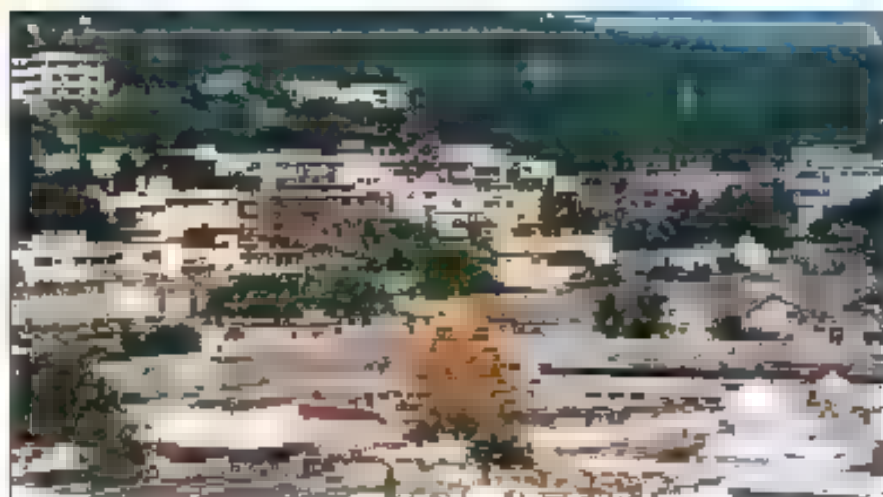
Temple removed from a site that was submerged by the damming of the

Krishna. 15 km (9 miles) to the north. Standing on a high terrace, it is similar to the Nava Brahma group, except that the sculptural details have eroded.

Just southwest of the Nava Brahma Temple complex are the **Papanashanam Temples** (9th–11th centuries). These temples have imposing multi-tiered pyramidal roofs but little external decoration though the interior columns are ornately carved. One of the temples has a fine ceiling panel of Vishnu's incarnations (see p679), and another has a powerful image of Durga.

🏛️ **Archaeological Museum**

🕒 Sat–Thu. 🗓️



View of Tirupati, with the gold-gilded vimana of the temple

Tirupati 18

Chittoor district 585 km (364 miles) S of Hyderabad 227,700 12 km (7 miles) S of the city centre, then taxi. Andhra Pradesh Tourism, Sridevi Complex (0877) 228 9120. Brahmotsavam (Sep/Oct)

The most popular destination for Hindu pilgrims in India.

Tirupati is the site of the **Shri Venkateshwara Temple**,

situated in the Tirumala Hills, 700 m (2,297 ft) above the town. The seven "sacred hills" of Tirumala are believed to symbolize the seven-headed serpent god Adishesha, on whose coils Vishnu sleeps. The temple dates to the 9th century, although it has often been expanded and renovated from the 15th century onwards.

The aura that surrounds Lord Venkateshwara (a form of Lord Vishnu, who is also known as Balaji) as the "Bestower of Boons" has made his temple the most visited and the richest in India. It eclipses Jerusalem and Rome in the number of pilgrims it attracts – around 25,000 a day, and up to 1,00,000 on festival days. The gold *vimana* and flagpole, and the gold-plated doorway into the inner sanctum proclaim the temple's wealth. The jet-black stone image 2-m (7-ft) high, stands on a lotus and is adorned with rubies, diamonds and gold. The deity also wears a diamond crown, believed to

be the singlemost precious ornament in the world. He is flanked by his consorts, Sridevi and Bhadevi. The entrance portico has superb life-size images of the Vijayanagara king and queens (see pp530–33), who worshipped Venkateshwara as their protective deity.

The entire complex is built to accommodate the huge influx of pilgrims, who come to seek favours from Lord

Venkateshwara. This is one of the few temples in South India where non-Hindus are allowed into the inner sanctum. Devotees wait patiently in long queues for a special *darshan*, and make offerings of money, gold and jewellery that net the temple an annual income of nearly 15 billion rupees.

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD), which runs the temple, employs a staff of 6,000 to see to the pilgrims' needs and maintain the temple premises.

The temple complex includes a ritual bathing tank, and a small **Art Museum** with images of deities, musical instruments and votive objects. Surrounding it are green valleys and the Akash Ganga waterfall, which is the source of the holy water used for bathing the deity.

A unique feature at Tirupati is that many devotees offer their hair to the deity, and there are separate enclosures for this purpose. It is believed that since hair enhances a

person's appearance, shaving it off sheds vanity as well.

This offering is usually made after the fulfilment of a wish. The hair-offerings are later exported to the United States and Japan where they are made into wigs.

Most pilgrims stop at the small Ganesha shrine in the foothills, and at the **Govindarajaswamy Temple** in Tirupati town, before driving up the hill to the Tirumala shrine. This temple, which dates to the 16th–17th century, is dedicated to both Krishna and Vishnu. Built by the Nayakas, the successors to the Vijayanagar rulers, it is approached through a massive grey outer *gopura* that dominates Tirupati's skyline, and is carved with scenes from the *Ramayana* (see p27). An exquisite pavilion in the inner courtyard has carved granite pillars, an ornate wooden roof, and impressive sculptures of crouching lions. The temple has a magnificent image of the reclining Vishnu, called Ranganatha, coated with bronze armour. A short distance north of the temple is the **Venkateshwara Museum of Temple Arts**, with temple models, photographs and ritual objects.

Shri Venkateshwara Temple

daily Darshan, 6–11am. Extra charges to join the shorter queue for special darshan of the deity



Lord Venkateshwara, the presiding deity at Tirupati



The main gateway to Govindarajaswamy Temple

Avatars of Vishnu

Vishnu, the second god in the Hindu Trinity, personifies the preserving power of nature. Seen as the most "human" of the gods and the redeemer of humanity, he is said to have appeared on Earth in several avatars or incarnations whenever the cosmic order was disturbed. From the 2nd century, a



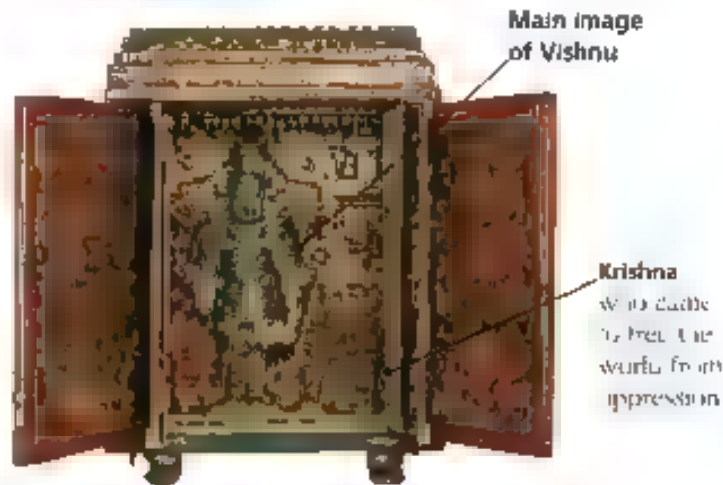
Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu

new devotional worship of Vishnu's incarnation as Krishna developed in South India, and, by AD 1000, Vaishnavism had become widespread. At its most famous temple, in Tirupati, Vishnu is worshipped as Venkateshvara, the God who fulfils Desires. Laksami, the Goddess of Wealth, is his consort.

THE TEN INCARNATIONS

Vishnu descends to earth periodically in order to redress the balance between good and evil. He is said to have ten main avatars, of which nine have already appeared, the tenth is yet to come.

Kavadi is a portable wooden shrine which shows Vishnu in his Krishna avatar, protected by the serpent Adisesha, and with his brother Balarama.

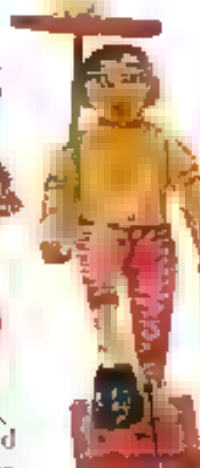


Matsya, the fish and first avatar, rescued Manu, the first man, and the Vedas from a flood.



Kurma, the tortoise and second avatar, churned the ocean to produce *amrita*, the divine nectar.

Rama, the seventh avatar, is the embodiment of goodness.



Parasurama, the sixth avatar, came to subdue the Kshatriyas who were overpowering the Brahmins.

Buddha, is the ninth avatar (see p.221).



Krishna

Varaha, the dwarf pig and the fifth avatar, saved the world from a demon.



Varaha, the boar and third avatar, saved the earth from drowning in the ocean by lifting it up on his tusks.



Narasimha, the half-man, half-lion fourth avatar, killed the demon Hiranyakashipu and delivered the earth from his evil deeds.



Kalki, the tenth avatar, is still to come. Vishnu will then appear for the final destruction and will recreate the world in perfect purity.



Rani Mahal, roofed by stepped pyramidal towers, at Chandragiri

Chandragiri 29

Tirupati district 12 km (7 miles) W of Tirupati from Tirupati

This small village was once an important outpost of the Vijayanagar kings. It later became the capital of the Aravidu ruler Venkatapaddeva (r 1586–1614), whose reign saw the decline of the Vijayanagar Empire.

Chandragiri's once glorious past is reflected in the massive walls of its late 16th-century fortress and some abandoned palaces. The most important of these is the **Raja Mahal**, which has an arcaded Durbar Hall and a domed pleasure pavilion. It was here that Sir Francis Day of the East India Company was granted land in 1639, in order to set up a factory in what later came to be known as Madras (see p557). Nearby is the **Rani Mahal** with its striking pyramidal towers and its façade decorated with foliate and geometric motifs.

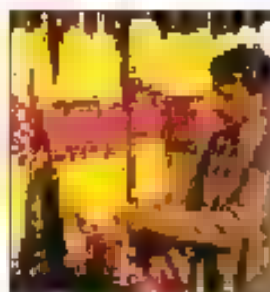


A temple next to the ruined palaces at Chandragiri

Sri Kalahasti 20

Chittoor district 36 km (22 miles) E of Tirupati from Tirupati Temple Festival (Sep/Oct)

Located between two steep hills on the southern bank of the Svarnamakshi river, this town is one of the most important pilgrimage centres in Andhra Pradesh. Dominating one end of the crowded main street is a 36.5-m (120-ft) high free-standing *gopura* erected in 1516 by Emperor Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar (see pp530–33). The royal emblems of



Flower seller at Sri Kalahasti

the dynasty depicting the boar and the sword together with the sun and the moon are intricately carved on to the walls of this seven-storeyed towered gateway.

Nearby similar but smaller *gopuras* provide access to the **Kalahastishvara Temple**, the town's main attraction, surrounded by a paved rectangular compound. A doorway to the south leads into a crowded enclosure of columned halls, pavilions, lamp columns and altars, connected by a maze of colonnades and corridors. Some of the columns are carved as rearing animal figures. In the north corridor are a set of bronzes of the 63 Shaivite saints called Nayannars (see p45). The inner sanctum, opening to the west, enshrines the *vayu* (air) linga, one of the five elemental lingas of Shiva (see p586) in South India. It is a curiously elongated linga protected by a cobra hood,

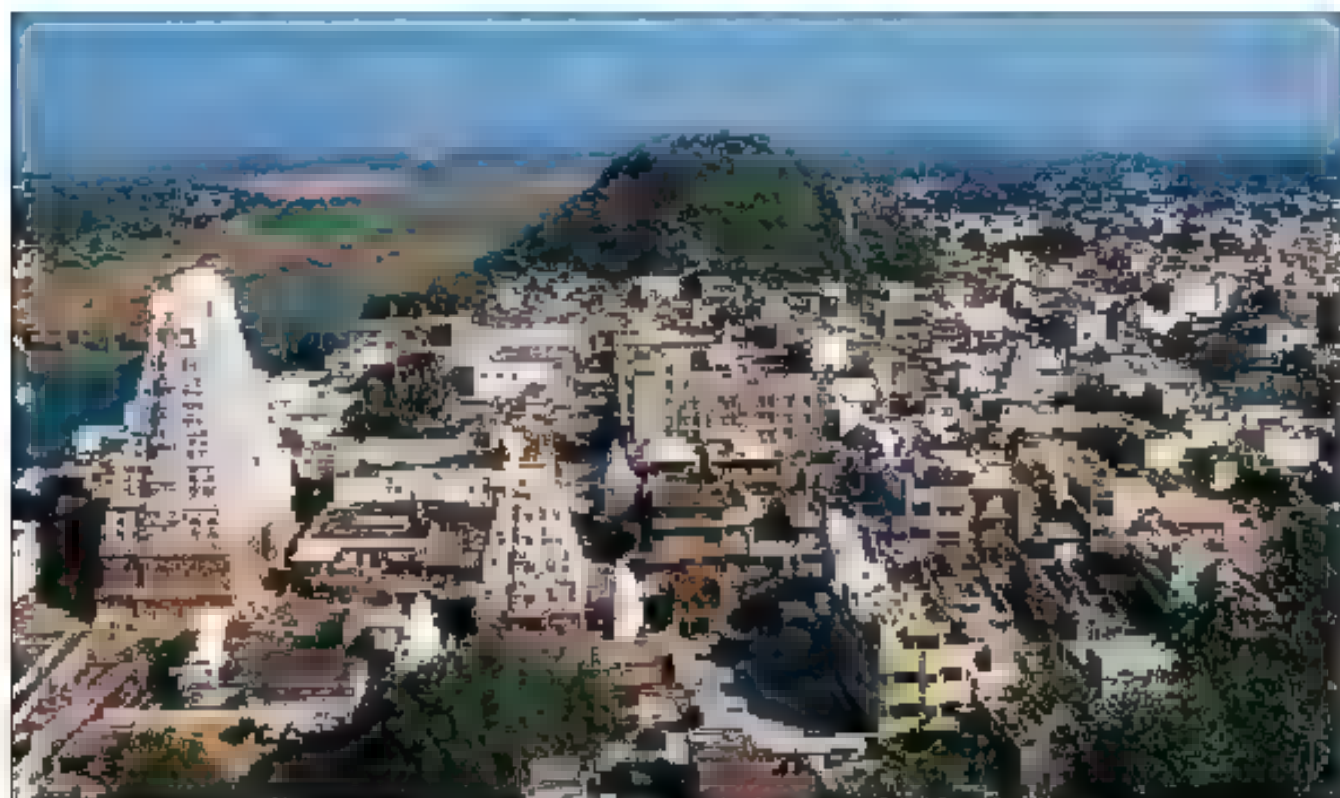
made of brass. According to a local legend, a spider, a cobra and an elephant worshipped the linga in their own special way. The spider first spun a web around it to protect it from the sun's

KALAMKARI FABRICS

Deriving their name from the word *kalam* for pen and *kari* for work, these brightly coloured cotton fabrics are produced at Machilipatnam (see p672) and Sri Kalahasti. Using a mixture of painting and dyeing techniques, figures of gods, goddesses, trees and birds are first drawn on the fabric, and then painted with a "pen" made of a bamboo stick padded at one end with cotton cloth. The traditional natural colours of ochre, soft pink, indigo, madder red and iron black are characteristic of *kalamkari* textiles. *Kalamkari*s from Sri Kalahasti were part of temple ritual and, like temple murals, depict mythological themes, with gods, goddesses and other celestial beings. The ones from Machilipatnam display a distinct Persian influence (see p673) and once formed part of a lucrative trade with Europe, dating back to the 17th century.



Kalamkari depicting Shiva and Parvati



View of Sri Kalahasti town, with its towering gopuras and the Kannappa Temple on a hillock

rays. The cobra, when he reached the shrine, was so upset to see the linga covered with dirty cobwebs that he cleaned and covered it with little stones. The last to arrive was the elephant, who removed the stones and decorated the linga with flowers. This continued for some time until the three devotees, each sure that his way of worship was the purest and that the others had committed sacrilege, decided to confront each other. In the fight that ensued, they collapsed and Lord Shiva, pleased by their devotion, blessed them and named the shrine after them – Sri (spider), Kala (cobra) and Hasti (elephant).

Sri Kalahasti is also linked to the legend of Kannappa, the hunter, through its **Kannappa Temple**. One of the 63 Nayannars, Kannappa plucked out his eye in a frenzy of devotion and offered it to Shiva. A shrine commemorating him stands on the summit of the hillock that rises to the east.

Worshippers have thronged to this temple for generations to seek relief from the "evil effects" of Saturn. Some pilgrims also come here with their unmarried daughters in the hope that a special *puja* at the temple will help them find good husbands.

Puttaparthi 21

Ananthapur district, 437 km (272 miles) S of Hyderabad, 6 km (4 miles) S of ashram, then taxi to Dharmavaram, 40 km (25 miles) N of Puttaparthi, then bus. APTDC, (08555, 289 565) Sai Baba's Birthday (23 Nov)

As the birthplace of Sri Satya Sai Baba, the "god-man" who preaches religious tolerance, universal love and service to others, Puttaparthi has a very special significance for his vast number of devotees from all over the world. Sai Baba's ability to produce *vibhuti* (sacred ash), seemingly miraculously out of thin air, is considered by his devotees to be an important symbol of his god-like status and powers.



Sri Satya Sai Baba, a popular godman

From a very young age, Sai Baba, born as Satyanarayana Raju in this village on 23 November 1926, claimed divine powers. When he was only 14, he declared that he was the reincarnation of a celebrated saint, Sai Baba from Shirdi in Maharashtra, who died in 1918. It is believed that he will return after his death as

another saint called Prem Sai Baba. In 1950 Satya Sai Baba established an ashram for his followers, whose numbers had swollen to gigantic figures. Known as **Prasarthi Nilayam** or the "Abode of Highest Peace", it is today a large complex with guest-houses, dormitories,

kitchens and dining halls. Over the years, several buildings have appeared around the ashram – schools, colleges, residential complexes, hospitals, a planetarium, a museum and recreation centres, transforming this tiny village into a cosmopolitan township. Outside the ashram, at the lower end of the village, rural life continues, seemingly unaffected by the ashram's activities. The countryside around is very fertile, with stretches of well-irrigated fields.



Women working in the fields, Puttaparthi

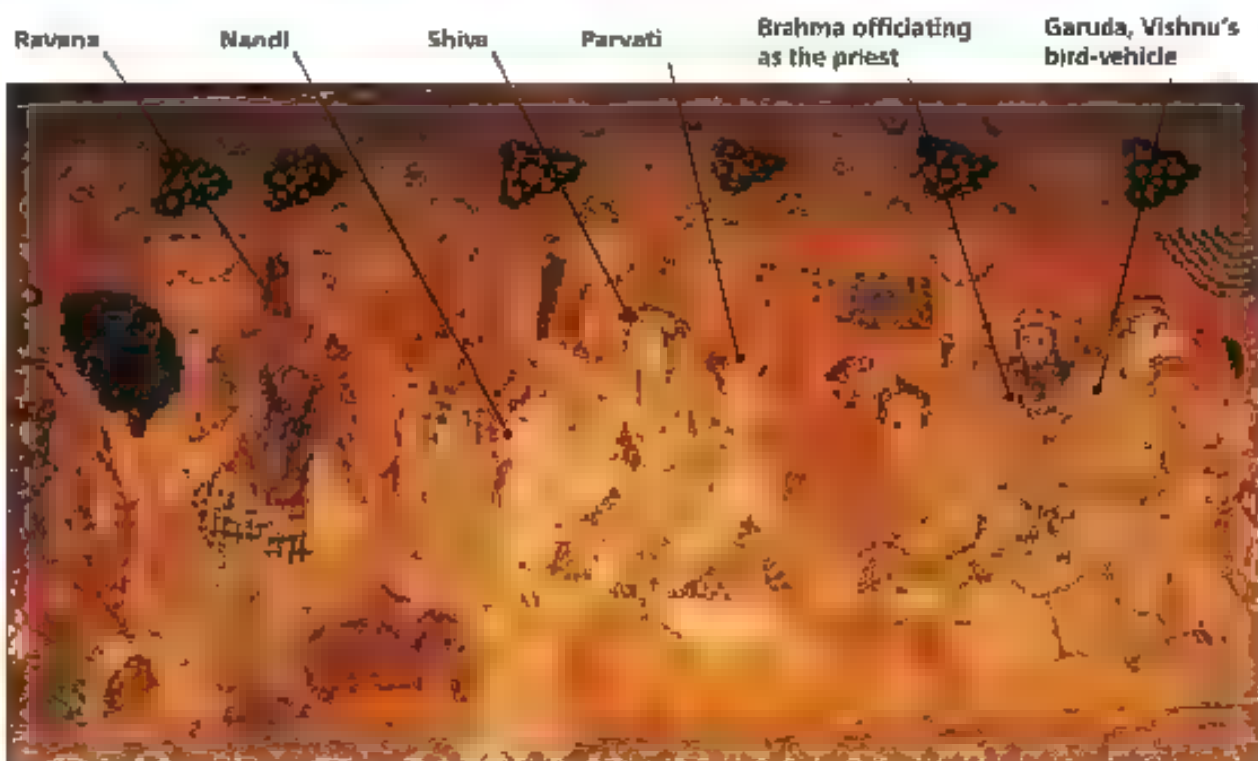
Lepakshi Paintings

The glory of Lepakshi lies in the magnificent frescoed ceilings of the Virabhadra Temple, where a series of exquisite paintings illustrate in lively fashion episodes from the epics and the *Puranas*. The figures are shown in profile with prominent eyes and sharply chiselled noses and canins. The frescoes are characterized by elegant black linework, set out against an orange-red background. Particularly



Lord Shiva as a mendicant

striking are the beautiful costumes and the detailed rendering of hairstyles, textile patterns and jewellery. The palette of colours is limited to white, green, black and various shades of ochre and brown, applied to a stucco surface specially treated with lime. Some of the most beautiful paintings are on the ceiling of the open *mandapa*, arranged in long strips along the surrounding rays.



THE MARRIAGE OF SHIVA AND PARVATI

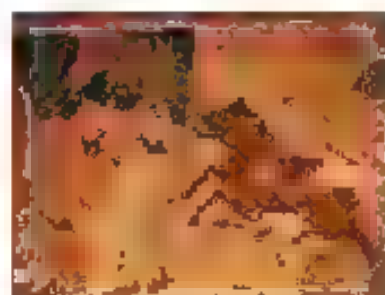
This is Lepakshi's most spectacular fresco, and echoes the murals at Ajanta (see pp480-81), in its colours, detailed depiction of costumes and jewellery, and graceful female figures.

Dakshinamurti (Shiva as a Divine Teacher) is shown seated on a billock, expounding on mysticism and philosophy to sages gathered

feet

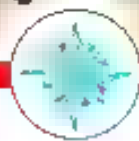


Parvati, with her maids, is shown getting ready for the wedding. Flat figures in stylized poses, often arranged in rows, characterize these paintings.



The Boar Hunt shows a wild boar charging at Arjuna and Shiva, who are preparing to shoot him.





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SPECIALIST HOLIDAYS 750-755



WHERE TO STAY

A wide choice of accommodation is on offer for the rising number of visitors to India – from modern Western-style deluxe hotels and grand old palaces to budget hotels and tourist bungalows. Prices vary accordingly, depending on the quality of services offered, and the location. Star-rated luxury hotels, speciality hotels, health spas and heritage hotels are expensive, but the amenities they offer more than justify the high room rates. The moderately-priced budget hotels, often managed by state

tourism departments, may lack the glamour of a five-star, but they are clean and excellent value for money. Cheaper accommodation is available at guesthouses, youth hostels and even spartan pilgrim abodes, such as *dharamshalas* and ashrams.



RAJVILAS

Logo of an Oberoi
luxury hotel

Hotel rates fluctuate with the season and are usually cheaper during the off-season from April to September.

The hotel listings on pages 690–717 provide a selection of some of the best hotels throughout India, to suit every taste and budget.

GRADING AND FACILITIES

At the top end of the scale are the five-star deluxe hotels. Most of these are part of international and Indian hotel chains, such as **Welcomgroup**, **Oberoi**, **Taj**, and the national India Tourism Development Corporation's (ITDC) **Ashok Group**. Many of the Ashok Group's properties, however, are now in the process of being sold to private operators. Next, are the four- and three-star hotels, many of them run by the state governments, followed by the cheaper guesthouses. The heritage hotels offer visitors a chance to stay in atmospheric, beautifully restored forts, palaces and stately homes.

PRICING AND BOOKING

The most expensive establishments are the five-star and five-star deluxe hotels as well

as the exclusive heritage hotels, although the smaller properties among the latter can be cheaper. Accommodation in the bigger cities is generally more expensive. Rates can differ among the state-run hotels, which have a good nationwide network. Prices vary at guesthouses, and seasonal discounts mean that prices can go down by almost 50 per cent.

Tariffs are based on the European system of room rent only, although in some places breakfast is included. Flexible prices dominate the market during the off-season and it is worth negotiating for a good discount.

Foreigners have to pay the dollar room rate in some hotels which have a policy of dual tariff (for foreigners and Indians), plus any additional taxes on the listed price. This is payable in foreign currency or in Indian rupees. Hotel rates are usually revised every

October, at the start of the tourist season. Many hotels, however, maintain the same rates as the previous year. Book well in advance during the peak tourist season (Oct–Mar). Since the classifications of hotels can be bewildering, it's best to get a complete description of what to expect in terms of both room and service quality. Getting a reservation confirmed in writing is a sensible precaution. While making reservations, especially for mid-range and budget hotels, do also check which credit cards are accepted. Note that some hotels demand payment in advance and will refund only part of it if the booking is cancelled.

Check-out time is usually 12 noon, though some hotels are more flexible and allow a 24-hour departure, or accept a small fee for a few hours' extension. Sometimes, some of the smaller hotels allow a later check out, for free. When paying, scrutinize the bill thoroughly and retain all receipts on departure.

TAXES

The hotel bill includes taxes levied by the federal and state governments. The federal government charges a uniform 10 per cent hotel expenditure tax (on room rent only), which is imposed on all hotels with a tariff of Rs 3,000 and above. States levy a luxury tax on room rent as well, and this varies from 5 to



The charming Raj-style Fernhill Palace Hotel in Ooty



Udaipur's opulent Lake Palace Hotel in the middle of Lake Pichola

25 per cent. There may also be local taxes such as sales tax, service tax and special taxes on alcohol, which vary from state to state. Some hotels also levy a service charge.

HIDDEN COSTS

Be prepared to pay extra for breakfast, the mini bar, mineral water, telephone calls, laundry, room service (if this is not a regular service), extra bedding, business centre usage, e-mails and faxes, concierge services and even pay channels on television. Transfers to and from the hotel are complimentary only for up-market package tours.

For non-local and international telephone calls, check if there's an in-house ISD/STD facility, though it's cheaper to use an STD booth (see p770) outside the hotel. Smaller hotels, with no running hot water, often charge extra for buckets of hot water.

LUXURY HOTELS

India's luxury hotels are comparable with the best anywhere in the world. They offer spacious suites and rooms, excellent service and a host of amenities. These usually include a travel desk, state-of-the-art conference facilities, shopping arcades, swimming pools, modern fitness centres, and multi-cuisine restaurants. The staff are very polite and attentive and can help plan itineraries and make arrangements for activities such as tennis, golf or riding. Reservations should be made in advance, especially during the peak season.

HERITAGE HOTELS

Several palaces, forts and *havelis*, particularly in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, have been restored, modernized and converted into plush, luxury hotels. These establishments have a gracious, old-world charm, and many are still run by former princely families, who treat visitors like honoured guests.

Classified as Grand, Classic and Ordinary under the umbrella of the **Indian Heritage Hotels Association of India**, some can be booked through private agencies, such as **HRH Group of Hotels**, **Neemrana Hotels** and **WelcomHeritage**. Bookings at these hotels can also be made through well-known travel agents.

MIDDLE-RANGE HOTELS

The four- and three-star hotels offer a scaled-down version of five-star luxury and are less expensive. Levels of comfort, cleanliness and

professional services are, however, high. Rooms are air conditioned and have attached bathrooms. In addition, there are restaurants, gift shops, business centres and sometimes extensive gardens for dining outdoors.

BUDGET HOTELS AND TOURIST LODGES

Budget hotels are often found around bus stands and railway stations. They are inexpensive, with simple decor, Indian or Western-style toilets, ceiling fans and basic food options in a dining hall. Enterprising proprietors sometimes offer e-mail services for a fee. The tariff in major cities is higher than in smaller towns.

An excellent option, particularly in lesser known tourist destinations, is the country-wide network of tourist bungalows and lodges run by the state tourism departments or the Ashok Group. Moderately priced, they offer both independent rooms with attached baths as well as dormitory accommodation.

DAK BUNGALOWS

Government-run dak bungalows (inns with very basic facilities) are cheap, clean, and conveniently located. Although not easily available for public use, visitors can contact the local or district authorities for help in making reservations. Book in advance as priority usually goes to visiting officials.



Cidade de Goa Beach Resort, designed by architect Charles Correa

GUESTHOUSES, PAYING GUESTS AND HOME STAYS

In certain states, such as Goa, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, family cottages and old mansions have been converted (though sometimes only partially) into guesthouses. While these usually fall into the mid-range or budget categories, the number of amenities, quality of service and price can be erratic. Look at rooms before checking in, as the difference between one room and another for the same price can be substantial. The better ones have air-conditioned rooms, with attached baths and Western-style toilets.

Home stays with local families are becoming a popular option, especially in Kerala. It is best to check with the state tourism offices (*see p761*) for a list of establishments under their Paying Guest Scheme. Rajasthan Tourism has a comprehensive list, as does Madhya Pradesh Tourism. In Kerala, **Sundale Vacations** specializes in home stays. The UK-based **Munjeeta Travels** also organizes home stay tours across India.

DHARAMSHALAS AND ASHRAMS

Religious centres, among them *dharamshalas*, ashrams and monasteries, offer clean but basic accommodation all over the country. For most, prior booking is not essential and stay is often free, although donations are appreciated. It is wise to abide by the rules of the house and not offend



Luxury campsite at Pushkar during the annual cattle fair

any sentiments. Some ashrams in the older sections of town may provide only a mattress on the floor, which should suffice if the stay is just for a night. But be prepared to share rooms and bathrooms with others.

Popular ashrams such as the **Sri Aurobindo Ashram**, the **Ramakrishna Mission** and the **Sivananda Ashram**, have branches spread across the country, and bookings must be made in advance. Their head offices can be contacted for details.

In Ladakh, many monasteries run hotels fairly close to their premises. One of the best is the **Lamayuru Monastery Hotel** which has a great setting within the compound (*see p138*).

NATIONAL PARKS AND CAMPING SITES

Most National Parks and wildlife sanctuaries have forest rest houses with basic facilities. Since most of these are often reserved for forest officials, many of the larger parks now have plush

private resorts located on their periphery. The most popular among these are in Ranthambhore (Sher Bagh), Corbett (Infinity Resorts), Kaziranga (Wildgrass) and Nagarhole (Kabini River Lodge). Reservations can be made through **Wild World India**, or through travel agencies. Camping is not allowed inside wildlife sanctuaries, and as a rule, it is not even safe to venture out for unguided walks.

Tented camps are provided by operators who organize adventure tours, such as river rafting along the Ganges (*see p185*), or those that specialize in camping holidays (*see p752*). Check the arrangements in advance, as some may not provide mosquito nets or mineral water. In Rajasthan, some hotels offer guests the option of staying in luxury tents set in spacious gardens. During the Pushkar and Kumbh *melas* (fairs), the state governments provide tented accommodation.

SPECIAL HOTELS

The rising interest in holistic health and well-being has spawned a number of exclusive health spas and specialized resorts. The most popular are those that offer herbal treatments, such as Ayurveda, and yoga. Other services include massage therapies, such as aromatherapy and reflexology, and meditation. Usually, a strict diet is part of the spartan regime, although rules at the top-end resorts are flexible. Raj Vilas and Amar Vilas of the **Oberoi Group** and



Riceboat or kettuvallam, Kerala backwaters

Ananda are world class spas. Kerala's *kettuvallams* (converted rice boats) are luxurious and have good services. Trips can be organized by **Tourindia**.

YOUTH HOSTELS

India has an excellent network of youth hostels. Although these are available at very low rates, they also tend to be packed. Members of the **Youth Hostel Association of India** and Youth Hostel International get priority bookings, but non-members can get a room for a higher fee. Both room and dorm-style accommodation is available. The **YMCA** is better equipped, though more expensive and located in fewer towns.

TOUTS

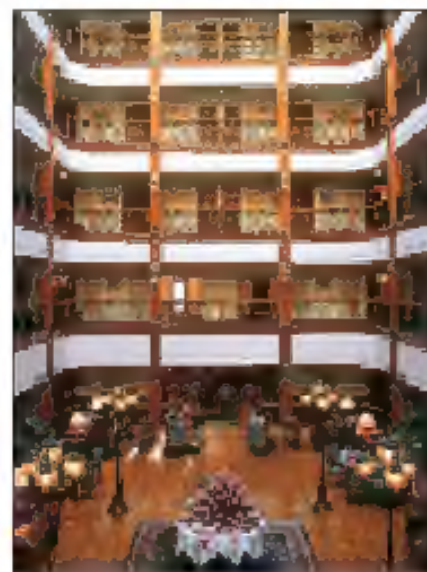
Visitors with no prior bookings should contact tourist counters at the airport, railway station or bus stand to avoid being harassed by touts, who also

operate as taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers. Many are very persuasive and offer incredible discounts, all for a commission. Some, however, are genuinely helpful, and if there is no other option, keep the driver waiting until sure about the lodgings. Speak to a policeman if they become too persistent.

FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED AND CHILDREN

Though facilities for the disabled are few, hotel staff are generally considerate. The government has recently initiated a move to add wheelchair ramps, special lifts and bathrooms wherever possible, although older properties, even the five-star hotels, may find it difficult to accommodate them.

Most hotels have no special amenities for children. However, Indian hotel staff are usually good with children and provisions can be made for extra beds. Only a few hotels offer baby-sitting services,



The impressive entrance foyer, Cecil Hotel, Shimla

TIPPING

Despite the inclusion of service charges in the bill, tips are expected in most places. The amount is discretionary. A tip of Rs10 is fine for parking attendants, room service and porters, but waiters expect ten per cent of the bill. Taxi drivers don't need to be tipped. However, tipping is a great way to get things done quickly.

DIRECTORY

HOTEL CHAINS

Ashok Group

ITDC, 7 Lodhi Rd, Delhi.
Tel (011) 2436 0303.
www.theashokgroup.com

Oberoi Group

Oberoi Maidens, Delhi.
Tel (011) 2392 5464.
www.oberoihotels.com

Taj Group

Taj Intercontinental, Mumbai.
Tel (022) 2202 5515.
www.tajhotels.com

Welcomgroup

Maurya Sheraton, Delhi.
Tel (011) 2611 2233.
www.welcomgroup.com

HERITAGE HOTELS

Indian Heritage Hotels Association

Sansar Chandra Rd, Jaipur.
Tel (0141) 237 1194.
www.indianheritagehotels.com

HRH Group of Hotels

City Palace, Udaipur.
Tel (0294) 252 8016.
www.hrhhotels.com

Neemrana Hotels

A-58, Nizamuddin East, Delhi.
Tel (011) 2435 8348.
www.neemranahotels.com

WelcomHeritage

31, Siri Fort Rd, New Delhi.
Tel (011) 2626 5550.
www.welcomheritagehotels.com

GUESTHOUSES, PAYING GUESTS & HOME STAYS

Munjeeta Travels

12 Cavendish Rd, Woking, Surrey, GU22 0EP, UK.
Tel (01483) 773 331.

Sundale Vacations

39/5955-A, Atlantis Junction, MG Rd, Kochi.
Tel (0484) 235 9127.
www.sundale.com

DHARAMSHALAS & ASHRAMS

Lamayuru Monastery Hotel

Lamayuru Monastery, Ladakh district, Jammu & Kashmir.
Tel No telephone.

Ramakrishna Mission

Belur Math, Howrah district, West Bengal.
Tel (033) 2654 1144.
www.sriramakrishna.org

Sivananda Ashram

Divine Life Society, PO Shivanandanagar, 249192, Tehri Garhwal District Uttaranchal.
Tel (0135) 243 0040.
www.divinelifesociety.org

Sri Aurobindo Ashram

1 Goubert Salai (Beach Road), Pondicherry.
Tel (0413) 233 4836.
www.sriurobindoashram.org

NATIONAL PARKS & CAMPING SITES

Wild World India

21, Kailash Hills, New Delhi 110 065.
Tel (011) 2691 4417.
www.wildworldindia.com

SPECIAL HOTELS

Tourindia

PO Box 163, Thiruvananthapuram.
Tel (0471) 233 1507.
www.tourindia Kerala.com

YOUTH HOSTELS

YMCA

YMCA Hostel, 1 Jaisingh Rd, PO Box 612, Delhi.
Tel (011) 2336 1915.
www.ymca.int

Youth Hostels Association of India

Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, 5, Nyaya Marg, Delhi.
Tel (011) 2687 1969.
www.yhandia.org